

# Strange and Terrible! : Serial Killers



Number 1: Why Did They Do It?

Zem Books  
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Strange and Terrible!: Serial Killers # 1: Why Did They Do it?

By

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Number one of a three part series.

This publication is dedicated to the hardworking, fearless men and women of law enforcement.

Picture opposite page: A refrigerator full of human heads being taken out of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's apartment.

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Fire will come, and judge, and condemn all things. Leave rest and quiet to the dead, where they belong. Whatever we see when awake is death; when asleep, dreams...

--Heraclitus

## Why Did They Do It?

*Why did they do it?*

Well, that's really the question, isn't it: Why? Why do people commit heinous crimes against their fellow human beings, all the while knowing that the possibilities are quite good that they will be captured, convicted, and in some cases, even executed? Furthermore, what possible motive could exist for those who murder not one victim out of malice, or greed, or inflamed, perverted passion, but for those who murder a continual string of victims, anonymous personages, many of whom they have never before even met?

The term *serial killing* is a relatively new one: before the term came into existence, the widely-applied designation of such random acts of perverted violence was a "stranger killing". Such individual who perpetrated these crimes were believed to be transients, bums who wandered into a sleepy town, and caught the unsuspecting victim by surprise. Usually, these victims were dispatched in a quick act of brutal savagery, and then their earthly remains were deposited, unceremoniously, in an abandoned lot, the woods, a country field, or, as in the case of Jack the Ripper, in an alleyway on a major metropolitan area. The psychiatric aspect and rationale behind "stranger killers" eluded police experts; to a great degree, they still do.

It was once believed that such nefarious individuals were the product of genetics, a sort of "throw-back" to an earlier form of man that was alternately cursed or blessed with a more primitive, brutal set of adaptive skills; in other words, his savagery was something that was bred into him by the fierceness of his conditions, by the need to hunt, survive, to "kill or be killed". Phrenologists, those discredited quacks of long ago who maintained that the character and intelligence of an individual were, somehow, related to the shape and size of their skull, gave ample (if questionable) evidence concerning what they believed to be the genetic character of homicidal madness, depravity, and perversion. Yet, their notions

are seen today as discarded and outmoded nonsense.

Today, we take the psychiatric angle: abuse, poor parental relations, sexual dysfunction, and other psychological abnormalities are brought into play as the chief culprit behind the deranged actions of fiendish killers. In our more enlightened age, we have replaced demonic possession with schizophrenia, genetics with being born just plain “bad”.

But are we, really, any closer to actually discovering the truth? Perhaps not. For, for every case of a mad killer that’s been spawned by an abusive, horrid childhood, there are myriads of other examples of mad killers that, supposedly, had “model childhoods” (Ted Bundy, for example).

No, the answer must, we believe, lie in the strange, spiritual composition of every human heart. As writer Jim Goad once observed, in the pages of his horrid, graphic, controversial “murder zine” *Answer Me!*, “Great souls rarely spring from happy environments”. If this be true, then our measure of greatness must be proportionate to the amount of objective “good” an individual can perform for society; other souls may be “great” as well, but not in the same sense as a Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, or Martin Luther King.

Some would contend that Osama Bin Laden was a “great soul”, that Adolph Hitler shined like a star in the firmament of a dark, blood-streaked Wagnerian sky, that Jack the Ripper earned every single decade of his long infamy, and would, indeed, qualify as a “great soul”, if not a particularly conspicuous character.

Indeed, there seems to be something rotten at the core of some of us, something that actively seeks our own destruction, to a greater or lesser degree, as well as the destruction of our environment and our fellow beings. The healthy individual subsumes these gross, barbaric, bestial feelings beneath layers of socialization, respecting the aura of “taboo” that makes indulging in murder and vice a step downward, toward the animalistic. The vast majority of men and women, while they may violate the social contract in some small way at some point in their lives, know instinctively that certain barriers

can never be crossed without a concomitant loss of that essential something that comprises the make-up of our humanity. Some doors can never be closed; some nightmares last forever.

Not so for the “great souls” of the biographies that make-up the body of this volume. Each, in their turn, were missing that same essential element that keeps the vast majority of their fellow men from engaging in Locke’s “war of all against all”. Some were driven by madness, some by money, and some by sheer mischief; driven over the edge by the “Imp of the Perverse”; they sought destruction as an antidote to a life and a sense of self that seemed forever to be missing the essential ingredient that makes great and useful souls of us all.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century stands as the most blood-soaked epoch in human existence. From the horrors of the trenches of W.W. 1, to the nightmares of Nazism, the Holocaust, genocide, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the “Cold War“, Vietnam, assassinations, terrorism, racial riots, lynching, famine, AIDS, crime, and serial killings, we spent the 1900’s awash in a mighty ocean of blood, malevolence, paranoia, and suffering.

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we find the situation to be much the same; in fact, in some ways, it has simply escalated forward another few steps. War rages in Iraq, Islamic militancy threatens lives worldwide, social upheavals have become as common as the twirling masses of tired propaganda printed on one, many yellowed pages, or filling up bytes of information on the Internet. Everywhere we turn, Jesus’ prophetic words ring: “And there will be wars, and rumors of wars.”

And, as recent media events have shown, we aren’t shut of the serial killer as a social phenomenon just yet. Just recently, the notorious killer known for years only as “BTK” was apprehended by police, who realized in shock that the fellow they had so long been in pursuit of was little more than a common, humdrum little fellow who went to church, watered his lawn, and looked like everybody’s next door neighbor. Once again, the world had expected a gorgon of monstrosity, a “great soul” of killing, and instead, had found that the



individual from their worst nightmares wore the face of suburban placidity.

*We have met the enemy, and he is us.*

This volume attempts to trace the history of murder and mayhem through its celebrity practitioners. The vast majorities of individuals included in these pages could clearly be defined as “serial killers”; that is, they have each killed at least three people with a short “cooling-down” period in between murders. Some however, such as Ed Gein, are included not because they can be clearly defined as serial killers (although if he had not been apprehended, certainly Ed Gein would have continued to kill), but because the sheer gruesomeness and barbarity of their acts sets them apart from the run-of-the-mill murderer whose passion is often directed toward murder-for-profit or out of a single, jealous burst of romantic passion. Although there are several killers profiled within that might qualify as being, at least partially, motivated by profit, by and large all of the histories I have written cover individuals whose names have become synonymous with bloodletting.

The did it for many reasons, some true and some only partly true, but for the most part, the individuals who were deemed worthy of being included did it because they *liked* it. It’s just that simple.

Even Lizzie Borden, who spent her homicidal passion in one morning of mad mutilation, could not be accused of acting out of any motive besides a deep-seated emotional need to rid herself of the pain inflicted upon her by those she had ceased to love. Having indulged this need, having *enjoyed* the aftermath, she disappeared into obscurity.

As well as the classic “serial killers”, we also have dealt, in a more general way with two distinct , and especially violent eras of crime: the “Old West” of Jesse James, and the outlaws of the early twenties and thirties, such as Dillinger, Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, and “Baby face” Nelson; for, although these robbers and gunslingers were, superficially, motivated by the presumed riches offered them by

a life of bank robbing and holdups, each, in their own way, grew to enjoy killing, and of course, were it not for their own impetus toward criminal deviance , would have passed the whole of their lives in peaceful, dull obscurity.

We have left out the notorious bootleggers, Mob hit-men, and other *Mafioso* of Roaring Twenties fame, simply because there is nothing about them, especially, that suggests that they enjoyed murder. In fact, they seemed to use it, for the most part, as simply a means to an end, and not as the end in and of itself.

In fact, it is often said that the code of the Italian Mafia was that they only killed their own, or, whoever had personally wronged their organization. They, nearly always, left the families of their respective victims alone. Let's hope this honorable code still survives today.

Our roster includes only deviants, and while many of those deviants may, in fact, have offered one excuse or another for their behavior, or some practical motive, they all shared one common trait: they excelled at being *bad people*.

This book is the product of much research, and, as such, a number of different sources were used. A bibliographic essay follows the main body of the text, but, beyond that it is unencumbered by footnotes.

Thus we begin our tour of the blood-soaked catacombs beneath the mainstream of conventional history, taking our tour through the gas-lighted streets and dripping alleys into the recesses of minds poorly constructed, of souls suffering sin and seeking salvation in the solace of sex and violence, derangement and defilement; love and death.

Rome led the way, with their packed coliseums of cheering, jeering countryman, all glutted to the overflow of their sensory organs on the sights, smells, and sounds of struggle , and death.

Let the games begin!

Sawney Beane

Sawney Beane is a character that exists in the annals of myth: No one really knows, for certain, that he and his monstrous, inbred cannibal clan actually existed outside the tall tales and folklore of medieval Scotland. Accounts of him vary, but they are all certain as to one particular point: Beane and his huge family of savage wretches were cannibals, who may have been responsible for as many as one thousand deaths.

Sawney Beane was, apparently, born in Edinburgh sometime in the late 1300's, and showed a propensity for strange and violent behavior at a very early age. Reportedly a sullen man, he was apparently suspected by his fellow villagers of being a witch or grave-robber, and was summarily cast out in exile, taking with him only a young woman he considered as his wife.

He hit upon a locale perfectly suited for a man wishing to spend the rest of his life in undisturbed solitude. He found, on the southernmost coast of Galloway, a large fissure at the base of a seaside cliff wall, which led downward, for the distance of one mile, into a natural cavern where Sawney and his macabre bride could be reasonably assured that they could pass the decades without ever being discovered. So hatched the horror of their macabre doings.

In time, the couple had managed to breed a family of some fourteen feral children, all of which would, naturally, require sustenance that was beyond the means of Sawney Beane and his wife to provide for them.

Sawney Beane, at the outset, lived by what he could rob from unwary travelers of the highland roads. Typically what coin as he managed to plunder could provide meagerly for his starving, outcast progeny. However, with the passing of the years and the growth of this hideous brood through incest, the familial ranks swelled to an awe-inspiring forty.

At the same time, whatever ties that had once bound them to some sense of civilized normality receded into the mists of yesteryear to such an extent that, by this point, the family had degenerated into a veritable tribe of savages the likes of which might not be uncommon in the darkest reaches of the Congo.

Travelers who once may have simply been beaten and robbed were now killed outright, and not only removed of their belongings, but also of the very flesh of their bones.

This provided a grim feast for the Beane tribe, which had acquired not only a fondness for robbery, murder, and incest, but also for cannibalism.

Brains could be pickled in brine; human fat could be treated and cured in much the same way as venison. The children and grandchildren must never have known any other way of life; they were born into a world of brutal savagery and horror few of us could only dare imagine.

Even large groups of travelers could be set upon and consumed by the Beane clan, and, though their body parts did, occasionally turn up as grim artifacts washed up by the tide, the only explanation at first proffered for the mysterious deaths were that perhaps a pack of wolves were roaming about the highland roads of Galloway.

Eventually, even this explanation proved to be unsatisfactory, and further, darker tales began to circulate, tales concerning demons, werewolves, and undead horrors of myth haunting the highland roads.

King James the First of Scotland put forth an edict that those responsible be tracked down and dealt with harshly. Many suspicious, but otherwise innocent individuals danced at the end of a gallows rope for little more than having roused the curiosity of their frantic neighbors. But it was all to no avail; the strange disappearances and murders continued.

It was a large group traveling back through the highlands from a village fair that, finally, put an end to the mystery concerning who was doing the killings.

They watched in horror as a fellow traveler was set upon by the Beane clan; his wife, already dead, was lying upon the ground in a horrifying condition, and being slowly devoured, while he was attempting the defense of his own life. The crowd of travelers finally chased the deranged cannibals back into the relative safety of the hills, but now the mystery as to who had been responsible for the

strange series of killings had been solved.

In short order King James arrived with an army of four hundred men, and combed the highlands until he finally set upon the fissure in the side of the cliff where his quarry dwelled.

Upon entering, the troops discovered a sight of nightmarish spectacle: a gruesome horde of primitives, now swelled to over fifty pathetic individuals, lived in heinous squalor in the dark filth of a cavern the ceiling of which was festooned with hanging human body parts and pieces of cadavers.

Indeed, some of the flesh found later was reported pickled in vats of brine, most particularly the brains, which were considered a rare and wonderful delicacy by the mad family.

The family, thus apprehended were led into the public square of Edinburgh, and summarily executed without trial, it having been determined that they were not fit but for the punishment meted out to beasts.

The men of the family were drawn and quartered, a situation which can only be described as a hideous death where an individual is spread between four good horses, each arm and leg attached, by means of a stout rope, to the individual's arms and legs. The horses are then sent in opposite directions, exerting excruciating pressure upon each extremity until, typically, the individual is pulled to pieces or (as it was in this case, supposedly) a sword can be used to amputate each offending body part at the most opportune moment.

The women and children lastly were burned alive; all of this was of course done for the gratification of a bloodthirsty and eager public, whose appreciation of such spectacles provides perhaps a telling reflection of our own modern, grim taste for violent movies, television, music, and paperback novels.

Since none of these things existed at this time, well, folks took their entertainment where they could find it.

It is said that, as the women and children were burned at the stake, a hideous chorus of howls, curses, and imprecations erupted from their smoldering bodies. Some claimed that these were the voices of angry demons finally purged by force through the act of

immolation, but know one really knows for certain.

So ends the Legend of Sawney Beane.

### The Baron of Blood: Gilles De Rais

The history of witchcraft and Satanism know no name greater or more fearful than that of Gilles de Rais, Marshal of France, and confidant of Joan of Arc, hero of the Hundred Years' War, black magician, and killer of infants.

Gilles was considered a valiant hero for much of his life; indeed, it was his honor to be bestowed with the title "Marshal of France" under the lordship of King Charles VII. Gilles was known to be a valiant, impeccable soldier, a ruthless strategist, a loyal confidant, and a sadist on the battlefield.

He was a sadist off of it, as well.

Gilles was a great lover and appreciated the arts, as well as many of the finer things in life. He was also a notorious gambler, and incurred debts too vast to be paid in full from the increasingly strained wealth of his estate.

He was known, for instance, for the lavish spectacles of his privately-produced "Mystery Plays" (popular plays which trained in religious instruction), which featured elaborate and highly-expensive sets, ornate costumes, and monstrous spectacle. These productions alone were conspiring to bankrupt him, and by the time the King put an official hold on his ability to squander any more of his wealth, he was already heavily in debt.

Although Baron De Rais was a devout, self-professed Christian, he was also a man given to dark extremes of desire, and forbidden lust. For years this murderous passion, which had perhaps been fostered on the battlefield, was sated by sweeping cruelty toward prisoners of war. However, soon the hidden, darkest aspect of his psychological dementia became manifest in deeds and doings too horrible for the mind to conceive.

For years, children had been disappearing from Nantes without a

trace; some would vanish upon doing their daily chores or errands, still others would go missing from their homes whilst their parents were out in the fields. It had happened with increasing frequency, and always left the same unanswered, lingering question upon the lips of the peasant folk.

Reportedly, Rais was wont to recruit young boys into the ranks of his “musical college”, purportedly for their singing and dramatic talents. Mindful people began to realize that certain boys, once they had accepted the offer of the bestial Baron, were often seen missing after the talented troupe made its next public recital. But of course, tongues wagged, and no one did anything at all.

Rais, of course, cruelly murdered his young charges, and with the help of his underlings secured scores, perhaps hundreds of young boys for the brutal purposes of torture and dismemberment. One of his favorite practices, reportedly, was to hang a young lad by his arms, blindfolded, from the ceiling, and watch him squirm in terror. Then, after a short time, the boy would be loosed, whereupon Rais would act in his role as comforter, and console the terrified child.

The practice was repeated until the victim finally succumbed from exhaustion. Then Rais would masturbate furiously over the dismembered corpse.

Once, or so he confessed, he lined the severed heads of his young subjects in a row, and implored his trusted confederates to vote on which was the loveliest. Then, he would flagrantly kiss the bloodied mouth, reaching a peak of exultation which, apparently, had never been quite afforded him by the butchery of the battlefield.

But it must have added an initial, diabolic fillip of perverse pleasure to his debauched atrocities when he hit upon an active interest in the occult; his first thought in this bizarre, new arena, was that with the help of an astute, and legitimate alchemist, he might indeed turn base metals into gold.

Thus, he could combine both his lust for money and his passion for the satanic in one fell swoop.

He secured the help of an Italian, called Prelati, who was reputed to be most-skilled in his ability to summon the Crown Princes of

Hell to do his bidding. Soon, bizarre rituals and strange incantations were being performed in the ghastly Châteaux De Rais.

The sacrificial offerings, at the outset, included mainly an endless succession of butchered birds; mostly chickens and doves. When these bloody hecatombs proved fruitless in summoning the forces of demonic power, Prelati suggested that the reason was, most likely, the minimal appeal the bodies of butchered fowl held for the unsavory spirits. Ever eager to oblige Prelati in this new turn of events, De Rais began his child-killing again in earnest, having only taken a short respite from the activity for the sake of his personal safety.

Even though he began to, once again, heap the bodies of murdered infants across the dripping floor of his ritual chamber, still his hope for demonic power and showers of gold bullions proved an ever-elusive reality. It is reported, however, that the Baron did manage to summon ONE demon, a being calling itself (ironically) “Barron”, but that the fleeting phantasm was frightened off when, in a burst of panic, De Rais crossed himself in the manner of any good Catholic. Prelati informed him that, henceforth this was not a mistake to be repeated in the presence of a fire-breathing angel from Hell.

Ironically, it was the “Hand of God”, or perhaps, the subterfuge of His servants, that saved De Rais (and countless more children, no doubt) from sliding any further down the pathway toward Hell’s hot flames.

De Rais, who considered himself the embodiment of Christian piety when he wasn’t torturing and murdering children to call up demons, committed a noxious affront when he reneged on the sale of a particular estate, deciding instead that, as he was so very close to finally securing his pact with Mephistopheles, selling off any more of his properties was, perhaps, bad form. He sent a contingent of soldiers to forcibly retake his lands, and they managed, in short order to accomplish this while brutalizing a priest.

This particular act so offended the duke of Brittany (who, truth be told, was secretly enamored of marshal De Rais’ vast holdings) , that he sought for any pretence that might be used to blackmail or



ruin the Baron of Nantes.

He secured permission to search the Baron's châteaux. It was only a short time before the ritual chamber, and the bodies of fifty murdered youths were discovered.

Baron De Rais confessed to his monstrous crime readily, seeking absolution from the Church, who, through dint of his station, did allow him a final communion. Ironically, Prelati the Wizard managed to escape punishment, and died sixteen years later, after being hung for other crimes.

Condemned to death, De Rais walked toward the scaffold boldly, imploring that onlookers (including the families of his victims) pray for him.

He was hanged just out of reach of the blazing bonfire that was to consume his body. Because of the special privileges of his royal blood, he was granted the mercy of hanging, rather than being burned alive. His cohorts received no such consideration, and were roasted upon the pyre completely conscious and fully-aware.

Noble ladies retrieved the relatively uncharred body of the fallen hero, and prepared a proper burial for him. Ironically, the place of his execution later became a shrine where pregnant women went to pray for the health of their unborn offspring.

It was remarked that De Rais bore a singularly strange, though handsome visage, in that he sported a deep black beard that shined nearly blue in a certain light, yet the hair on his head was of a Nordic blond. Hence, he was subsequently referred to as "Bluebeard" in local legend.

After many decades, the names of his victims (estimated between one hundred and three hundred), as well as their gender and class, and the other particulars of his deeds, became obscured, and the legend morphed until it told a tale of "Bluebeard" Baron De Rais, who married and murdered six wives, keeping all of the bodies in a locked room. Thus, as the story goes, it remained a secret, until the curiosity of the seventh wife gets the better of her.

During the Revolution of 1789, De Rais' tomb was ransacked by

riotous Jacobins. One wonders if karma was not, somehow, at play in this turn of events.

### The Real Dracula

Everyone is more than familiar with the story of *Dracula*: That deathless revenant has haunted the stage, screen, popular novels, and even comics since Bram Stoker first published his frightful, erotic novel of a centuries-old Romanian noble who lived by night to feast off of the blood of young Victorian women.

Few people realize, however, that *Dracula* is based on something more than a few old European folktales. The character is taken from the actual history of Wallachia, a land beyond the Carpathian Mountains, and bordered to the north by Moldavia and Transylvania. It is a land steeped in the myth and folklore of gypsies, werewolves, magic, monsters, and vampires.

His father Vlad II was the prince of Wallachia at time when the political situation in the embattled country was precarious to say the least; the Prince was often forced to change allegiances quickly, lest either the Hungarians or Turks which created pressure on separate fronts imperil the existence of his kingdom.

It was for this reason (and also, one must assume, for his barbaric cruelty) that he was honored with the rather unflattering moniker of “dracul”, which translates roughly as “dragon”, or even “devil”. The nickname was to earn his son Vlad “Dracula” (or, “son of the dragon”), an everlasting, immortal infamy.

Vlads’ sons were imprisoned for a short time by the Turkish sultan to ensure that their father would maintain a longer-lived allegiance to the Turks than what he was traditionally known for. Vlad Tepes spent four years in the dungeons of the sultan, where, it is rumored, he learned first-hand the propensity to cruelty which must be indulged in by the successful medieval ruler.

By 1448, he had left captivity to begin his own career of horror. First he spent some amount of time allied with the Turks, then turned his loyalty to Moldavia, then became a staunch leader of

Transylvania. One wonders if Vlad didn't find all this treachery to be good, dirty fun.

In 1456, his ascendancy to the throne of Wallachia was assured, and Vlad began a reign of terror comparable only to the excesses of the Roman emperors .

Vlads' favorite pastime, which earned him the further nickname of "The Impaler", speaks for itself. Prince Vlad's favorite method of execution was to line up thousands of tall wooden stakes and mercilessly impale his enemies on them, leaving them to die an agonizing death.

The impalement was accomplished through the heart, navel or anus. When it was a woman's turn (Vlad, it would seem, was no chauvinist when it came to cruel and merciless forms of execution) the unfortunate lass could count on being impaled through her sexual organs.

Freud, one supposes, would have had a field day with Prince Vlad.

Vlad utilized many familiar means of capital punishment, among them burning, boiling, beheading, and slow disembowelment, but it was for his peculiarity concerning impalement that he gained the awe-inspiring reputation that put him in such foul repute with nobles of a somewhat more restrained nature. One hideous example, preserved in visual tableaux by the skilled hands of an adept woodcutter, depicts Vlad amidst the impaled bodies of five hundred slowly-dying Saxons, while he dines on a merry outdoor feast.

Not the sort of chap you might have wanted to have along on a picnic.

So many accounts circulated through the centuries concerning the cruelty of Prince Vlad, it is hard to know where reality ends and legend takes over. He was known, for instance, to proclaim a large charitable feast for all the beggars his soldiers could gather. After having had them dine sumptuously on delicacies they could scarce have ever had a hope of indulging in, he would very politely rise, and ask the assembled throng if they wished to live the rest of their lives in such luxurious comfort. When they, to a man, responded in the affirmative, he had them trapped inside the dining hall, and burned

alive.

It was said, that upon one occasion, he condemned a man to be butchered slowly and fed to lobsters. It was further stated that, upon this grotesque act being completed, the mans' luckless family was forced to eat the same lobsters. They were then burned alive. The mind boggles. Could it all be true?

A most notorious diddle was the turn played on visiting Turkish diplomats, who according to their custom failed--and then, of all horrors, boldly refused--to remove their turbans.

Vlad obliged them their eccentricity by affording them the assurance they would never be able to remove them again: He had them nailed to their heads.

However, all of this brazen butchery backfired on poor Prince Vlad when it came time to enlist allies in his eternal struggle against the Turkish invaders, for when it came time to ask for some assistance from fellow Christians, most of them found themselves too appalled at the murderous despot to be much concerned.

Although, initially, Prince Vlad had some successes at forestalling the Turkish invasion (the Turks being cowed, somewhat, by the field of impaled bodies they happened upon as they mounted what would be their push into Wallachia) , he was forced to flee into exile.

He remained thus for fourteen years, four of which he spent imprisoned in Hungary. He was called, out briefly, to serve in the Hungarian army, yet again against the Turks, and eventually made his way back to Alachua, and re-ascended the throne, but only for a brief final sojourn; two months later he was dead, killed in battle against his life-long adversaries.

But his legend survived him, resurrecting his memory in the night-time stories old mothers told to their grandchildren to frighten them into pleasant dreams.

He lives on, too , in the vast modern myth of "Dracula", the suave vampire who sleeps by day and lurks the fog-shrouded streets of East London by night, a character that was first brought into existence by the mordant pen of Bram Stoker, and then imprinted upon the consciousness of countless generations, starting with the

first silent screen adaptation *Nosferatu* (1922), starring the cadaverous Max Shreck, and further refined into infamy by Bela Lugosi in the classic Universal feature *Dracula* (1931) directed by pioneering horror-maven Todd Browning.

In five hundred years, Vlad has been metamorphosed from a monstrously cruel despot, to a supernatural ghost with a bad summer-stock Hungarian accent and a penchant for tuxedos. To this very day, movies, television, toys, games, cartoons, music, and comic books still focus on the Dracula mythos, and the end is nowhere in sight.

In his homeland, history has been far-kinder to Prince Vlad, and his likeness is often sold on the streets of Transylvania, along with a particular vintage of plum brandy bearing his august sobriquet.

After all, impalements or not, he was a national hero for defending his homeland on behalf of Christendom.

One final note: It is said that, during the period of his final incarceration, Prince Vlad occupied his spare time, chiefly, with a very peculiar practice. It is rumored that he would chase down small animals, and impale them on sharpened sticks for his amusement.

Well, one supposes a great man should have a hobby.

### The Countess of Blood

It is often said that women represent ‘the fairer sex’. If this be so, then what on earth are we to make of women like Elizabeth Bathory?

A Hungarian countess, possessed of what was considered, at the time, to be “ravishing beauty”, Elizabeth Bathory held sway over a clutch of terrorized servants who had borne the full-brunt of their mistress’ wrath since her earliest years.

A stern, cruel young woman, Elizabeth meted out justice to the serving class at Castle Csejeth with an iron fist; oftentimes, brutal floggings and severe punishments were not seen as entirely out of the question, including having her servant girls stripped naked with their genitals put to the flame. On one occasion, it is rumored she had a too-noisy serving wench punished by having her mouth sewn

shut.

Need it be said that there was never a great abundance of love to share at Castle Csejethé?

At any rate, Elizabeth completed the dark portrait of the mad, gothic noble by also, reputedly, being adept at the practice of the ‘black arts’. She was known to curse her enemies, invoke the Devil and his vicious henchman, and all the while still maintaining her composure and mask of relative piety as a practicing Christian. Psychological compartmentalization was, apparently, her forte’.

So it was with the Crazy Countess until her fortieth birthday, when as she was one day soundly lashing an impudent servant girl, she chanced to splatter a dollop of hot blood on her own hands. When she ran to wash it off, she marveled at the whiteness of the flesh beneath; how it seemed to have resumed a sort of youthful vitality.

Utterly convinced that fortune had smiled upon her, and that she had, indeed, discovered a bloody “Fountain of Youth”, she immediately had the servant girl butchered by a male underling, and then instructed him to drain-off the unfortunate wenches’ steaming blood into a bath, where she commenced to partake in a sanguinary shower, all the while, invoking Arch-Demons, and praying for a return to youthful beauty.

So commenced a ruthless, illicit reign of terror that ended with a presumed total of anywhere from an estimated forty to a mind-boggling six hundred young female bodies; many were tortured, some indeed, made to consume raw strips of their own flesh before being drained of their life blood for the malevolent Mistress and her cruel beauty baths.

The situation, as so often happens, did not last for long, and concern over the fast-disappearing female population brought a contingent of troops to the Castle Csejethé. Upon entering the morbid dwelling, it soon became apparent, at least to the Countess, that she had been caught red-handed (pun not intended), as she was just about to dip her aging figure in the bloody whirlpool of her demented delights. The jig, as they say, was up.

Her brutish, male underlings were beheaded and burned quite quickly, but a perhaps more horrifying, though non-lethal punishment was deemed appropriate for a lady of her station.

Elizabeth Bathory was walled-in alive, in her own boudoir, for the rest of her natural life, having only a small slit in the doorway from which to obtain a tray of food. She was found dead, on the floor, three-and-a-half years later.

It is said that her ghost continued, for many years, to haunt the halls of Castle Csejeth with horrifying screams and mad imprecations.

But, surely, you don't believe that, do you ?

### Peter Stubbe: Werewolf

Peter Stubbe belongs in any thorough examination of the accounts of mediaeval monstrosity; his sordid career was an example of unparalleled perversity, capped by a hideous abomination to his own son that leave little doubt as to the fact that, somewhere within his icy heart, the Devil did, indeed, in some form lurk.

Peter Stubbe had been afflicted, since his earliest days, with the reputation of being a monstrous lad, given to thievery, bestiality, and a sullen, sordid countenance that did not win him many friends. By the time adulthood beckoned him, Stubbe was already a novice practitioner of the "black arts".

Stubbe was apparently successful in his attempt to conjure up the living Devil, and was able to secure with him a pact in which, for the price of his mortal soul, Stubbe was to be endowed with the power to transform himself into a blood-crazed, ravening wolf. The means for this transformation was provided by a leather belt which would accomplish the metamorphosis as soon as it was donned by the wearer.

Whatever one believes about the objective reality of Stubbes' magical device, "lycanthropy" (or so the particular mental disorder wherein men believe they possess the capacity to change into wolves is called) is an actual cataloged form of psychosis; albeit, a mercifully

rare one. Stubbe was, at the very least, suffering from this particular mental malady, and under its repressive influence enacted horrors sufficient to make a Marquis De Sade wince a little.

His reign of terror stretched a mind-boggling quarter of a century, wherein he indulged in a sickening career of rape, mutilation, defilement, and murder of both his enemies, and complete strangers; men, women, and children, alike.

Certainly one of his most barbaric recorded acts was the murder of his own son, accomplished by brutally ripping the lad apart with his teeth, after which he spilt the skull open, and ate the still-pulsing brain.

His preferred method of dispatching with victims was to lurk in the skin of his totem animal, the wolf, and then pounce upon an unwary traveler that happened by. He was then free to chew through the throat, rip sections from the body to devour, as he slowly worked himself to the pinnacle of his satanic ecstasy.

This was a ritual he was well-accustomed to, having performed scores of similar murders, and having the good fortune to have escaped discovery, and even suspicion for more years than even he probably believed, would have been possible.

A telling anecdote concerning the way in which he operated comes down to us in the story of three victims, two men and a woman, who, while coming home through the forest near Stubbes' cottage, heard a rustling in the bushes. When one of the men went into the bushes to investigate, Stubbe made short work of him.

After a few moments the second man went in to the dark concealment alongside the road, and likewise, did not return. The woman, at this point growing more and more hysterical, began to run as fast her legs permitted. Alas, it was to no avail.

Stubbe easily overtook her in his "wolf" form, and devoured her body. He battered on this particular victim to such an extent that no remains were ever recovered.

Stubbe likewise had a daughter, Beell Stubbe (all young women readers should feel themselves lucky not to have been burdened with such a grotesque moniker), who at a young age became her father's



chief source of sexual gratification. Assuming there ever were any offspring, one can well-imagine that they were dispatched in much the same manner as Stubbes' other victims; in that respect, perhaps, they were luckier than his other prey: for surely death would be preferable to life as the son of Peter Stubbe.

The area around Cologne had frequently worked to apprehend the long-time fiend by means of manhunts and packs of trained dogs, but had hitherto not had any real luck. Finally however, fate did smile upon them; it merely frowned at Stubbe himself, who was busily dispatching yet another in his seemingly-endless succession of victims when the pack of hunting dogs and their eager masters finally discovered the object of their investigation.

It was short work capturing Stubbe and bringing him back to the town of Bedburg to stand before the magistrates, who found themselves befuddled at the motivation behind such a long-running series of atrocities. A short turn for Stubbe on the rack cleared up much of their confusion, as he quickly confessed to his pact with Satan, his use of the magical belt, and his decades-long bloodbath which, finally, was brought to a swift, if agonizing end.

Apart from his daughter Beell, Stubbe possessed another paramour, a luckless harlot by the name of Katherine Trompin, who as much as his daughter, had acted for years as Stubbes' accomplice. The women were quickly rounded up, pronounced guilty, tortured, and burned alive.

Fro Stubbe, it was decided that more ghastly, and altogether fitting punishment was in order. He was tied to a wheel, over a slow-roasting fire, while long, blazing pincers were employed to strip off pieces of his flesh. These were then tossed to mongrel dogs, and quickly devoured. Lastly, an axe handle was used to fracture his joints. Excruciating.

He was then beheaded, and his head placed upon a pike with a picture of a wolf and, below, the wheel upon which his mortal form had been broken. His remains (sans head) were then burned at the stake, and the ashes tossed in a garbage heap.

As for the magical belt, despite the best efforts of curious

searchers, it was never recovered from the woods in which it was dropped by Stubbe moments before he was apprehended. Locals felt that the only explanation was that Satan had come back to reclaim his property.

The Devil, it was believed, was always loath to part with something useful.

### Sweeney Todd: Demon Barber

*"The church I was christened at burnt down the day after, and all the books burned. My mother and father are dead, and the nurse was hanged and the doctor cut his throat."*--Sweeney Todd

The story of Sweeney Todd, a maniacal barber of the late eighteenth century that robbed and murdered his customers, then dropped them down a trap door into a cellar, where they were quickly disemboweled by an accomplice and used for meat pies, is familiar to anyone that is well acquainted with English horror folklore; it has been celebrated in the pages of "penny dreadful" magazines (most notably by Thomas Peckett Prest, author of *Varney the Vampire*), and also on stage and screen.

It has been transformed into a successful musical by none other than Stephen Sondheim.

However, it is also, largely believed to be a story with no real basis in fact. And who could believe such a tale? Sweeney Todd depicts a grotesque barber with a trick chair that cuts his clients throats and throws the body down a trap door; hardly the sort of thing one expects to have ever actually happened.

Well, happen it did. The story of Sweeney Todd is as real as the straight razor he employed to cut the throats of numerous victims, before they were turned into pies for market. In the words of the immortal Robert Ripley, "believe it or not!"

Sweeney was born into the relative filth and misery of London in 1748. His impoverished parents worked in the garment industry; both were alcoholics.

Sweeney, from an early age, knew cruelty as a way of life; London was a veritable cesspit of abandoned children, drunken deviants, mentally-ill beggars, prostitutes, and babies abandoned atop dung heaps and mounds of garbage. One reliable source reports that torturing animals was considered a popular pass-time. It was, in every respect, no time to be a young child.

Gin, the preferred drink among the dwellers of the London slums, was consumed at an awesome and frightening rate. It was the universal opiate, assuring that the masses of the poor and dissatisfied remained listless in their sorry state. In short: as long as they were a;; drunk, they weren't planning any revolutions. The Soviet Union used quite the same logic in their free and generous distribution of vodka to their own teeming, impoverished populace.

Sweeney grew up just a short distance from the Tower of London, where he spent considerable time as a visitor. His fascination, both with the towers' animal menagerie, as well as its display of medieval torture implements, can only have reinforced his already growing understanding of the relationship between strength and cruelty; power, and punishment.

Sadly perhaps, Sweeney was doted upon by his mother, although he found himself incapable of returning her affection. Already he was brimming full of rage at the circumstances of his being, and one can only guess at what age he first began to formulate troubling dreams of power, theft, and murder.

His parents, eventually, simply disappeared; during the long, cold winter of his thirteenth year, they went out to buy gin, and never returned. It is supposed that they managed to drink themselves into a stupor on the streets, and froze to death. This was a typical death for many, as thousands were dying on the streets or in their homes from the cold.

As an orphan, Sweeney was turned over to the local parish, that they might secure for him an apprenticeship. Unluckily, he was placed with a dishonest tradesman aptly named John Crook, who manufactured a wide array of cutlery.

By the age of fifteen, the unfortunate lad was next on trial for

petty larceny. A conviction of theft could have well cost him his life, but the judge, in a moment of magnanimity, let the unfortunate youth off with a short spell at the abominable Newgate Prison, a West London jail that housed a bleak menagerie of despairing, misfortunate souls.

Although torture was slowly being phased away (more from expediency than anything else) the eighteenth century English penal system was still a model of corruption, abuse, and inhumanity. Executions were frequently preceded by torture, and the carcasses of some criminals would be hung in iron gibbets to publicly rot, as a warning for passersby. Newgate itself, was simply a bleak fortress of cages; no amenities, not even clothing or food, were provided for inmates, thus it became necessary to struggle to simply keep from freezing and starving behind bars.

Sweeney, long-adept at struggling uphill in the world, was able to convince a prison barber named Plummer to take him on as an apprentice. Pleased with his work, Plummer eventually began to share some of his money obtained from well-to-do prisoners. Sweeney was also employed, appropriately enough, to shave the heads of condemned men.

At the age of nineteen, Sweeney Todd found himself, once again, a free man. He very quickly established himself as a “journeyman barber”, plying his trade wherever he could, and eventually pairing with a known prostitute about whom nothing else is known.

This relationship led him to his first murder, that of a young gentleman who came calling for a shaving, and, lewdly describing an encounter with a young woman the previous evening. Sweeney, realizing at once that the young man was describing his faithless lover, grew immediately enraged, and sliced the man’s throat from ear to ear. The London papers of the time, reported it thusly:

*"A most remarkable murder was perpetrated in the following manner by a journeyman barber that lived near Hyde Park Corner, who had been jealous of his wife[...]A young gentleman, by chance coming into the barber's shop to be shaved and dressed, and being in liquor, mentioned having seen a fine girl in*

*Hamilton Street, from whom he had had certain favours the night before, and at the same time describing her person. The barber, concluding this to be his wife, and in the height of frenzy, cut the young gentleman's throat from the ear to ear and absconded."*

Miraculously, Sweeney was never apprehended for this initial murder. After casting about for awhile under various aliases, he finally secured a small shop-front of Fleet Street, near Temple Bar, an ideal location in that it was in close proximity to an ancient church, set atop an even older series of winding catacombs.

These tunnels were accessible by 186 Fleet Street, the location of Sweeney's shop, and the center of his industrious pursuit of murder and barbarity.

The area itself was well-known for its taverns, prostitutes, cutthroats, and the like. Mr. Todd must have felt right at home.

It of course was not long before Sweeney took up the razor, being aided chiefly by his ingenious invention of a rotating barber chair, that swung around on an axis. Below, a trapdoor led to a fatal plummet for the victim on a cold basement floor.

The fall itself was, usually, enough to kill the victim, but sometimes Mr. Todd was required to race into the basement, and quickly cut the luckless individuals throat. He would then descend into the ancient catacombs that ran beneath Fleet Street, and adjoined the moldering crypts beneath St. Dunstan's Church. This last facet of the case proved instrumental in the undoing of the diabolical Sweeney Todd.

In a short while, Todd had dispatched a number of individuals, including several errand-boys whose masters inevitably came calling, wondering what had happened to their young charges. Remarkably, no one ever laid a finger of suspicion on the homicidal barber.

Todd killed a Jewish pawnbroker, and was arrested for that; he was quickly acquitted due to "temporary insanity". He likewise slew a man in the streets in broad daylight, but fled the scene rapidly to the safety of the alleys of Hen and Chicken court. Again, miraculously, Sweeney Todd escaped detection.

Sweeney took the occasional apprentice, but showed little consideration for them. One lad, unfortunate enough to be apprenticed to the maniacal Todd, was later confined to an insane asylum.

Well, not all of us are made of stern stuff.

Sweeney eventually found his heartstrings pulled in the direction of a spinster named Margery Lovett, who enjoyed petty luxuries and who, like Todd himself, was essentially amoral. The two became lovers, and Todd (now swimming in a seemingly-inexhaustible reserve of money due to the murder and robbery of his clients), was quick to set her up in a private bakery near his own two-story shop. The bakery, located in Bell yard, specialized in sumptuous meat pies, ostensibly stuffed with venison. As Thomas Peckett Prest observed:

*"On the left side of Bell Yard, going down from Carey Street, was, at the time we write of, one of the most celebrated shops for the sale of veal and pork pies that London had ever produced. High and low, rich and poor, resorted to it; its fame had spread far and wide; and at twelve o'clock every day when the first batch of pies was sold there was a tremendous rush to obtain them.*

*"Oh, those delicious pies! There was about them a flavour never surpassed and rarely equaled; the paste was of the most delicate construction, and impregnated with the aroma of delicious gravy that defied description."*

Makes the mouth water, doesn't it? At any rate, it was only a short amount of time before Sweeney employed the services of his paramour to help with, shall we say, the disposal of certain "highly-compromising material".

He had, for several months, been simply piling corpses upon the floor of an ancient crypt below St. Dunstan. However, meat prices being what they were, both he and Mrs. Lovett soon hit upon a novel idea of how to dispose of unwanted remains.

Sweeney would begin by removing all valuables from the corpse, working by the flame of a guttering candle in the darkness below his store. Then he would remove the internal organs and flesh, carefully package them, and scatter the resultant bones amid the debris of the

crypts in the ancient catacombs, hoping against hope that they would remain unrecognizable amidst the gloom and decay in that sordid place--forever.

He would then walk the catacombs to Mrs. Lovett's shop, and be let in by a secret passageway in a false wall. The meat was then cut into recognizable portions and baked into the pies; the pies were a popular item, by the way, amidst the teeming, hungry crowds of Old London.

Of course, no story like this can, ever, have a happy ending. Sweeney had, whether through greed or ignorance, disposed of quite a few people beneath the catacombs of the ancient church, and the smell was becoming so overpowering that the congregation began to find themselves quite incapable of tolerating it. Just sitting through Sunday services was beginning to require the employment of a scarf soaked in perfume.

Upon examination, it was determined that the plumbing was perfectly operational, and that sewage was, in fact, not seeping into the catacombs from any leaks or stoppages. Therefore, the odor, temporarily, remained an enigma.

Unfortunately for Todd, the beadle of St. Dunstan's was also a constable of the Bow Street Runners, the early version of the London Police. Upon informing his superior Sir Richard Blunt, of the strange smell, and it was a happenstance occurrence that at the same time, Sir. Richard became dimly aware of strange rumors circulating around a barbershop very near the same Fleet Street locale, concerning the disappearance of several individuals into the premises. They, seemingly, had never been seen or heard from again.

Putting several factors together, Sir. Richard did a bit of digging and produced a report of an occurrence, describing the complaint filed by an elderly woman against the proprietor of the establishment in question, a Mr. Sweeney Todd.

The woman had come to the police, hysterically claiming that a certain brand of shoe buckle that had been favored by her missing husband had just mysteriously found their way to the feet of Mr. Todd. The woman, however adamant in her assertion, had been

dismissed by the police as an unstable individual, and nothing had ever come of her claim. Sir Richard thought that, indeed, there might be something there, after all.

It was a short amount of time later when he enjoined the company of his best officers to follow him on an expedition beneath St. Dunstan's. Armed with flickering candles, the men penetrated the bowels of the ancient crypt. It was only a short amount of time later that their worst fears found confirmation.

In the ancient, sealed crypts below the church, where no one had been buried for decades, the policemen found a grim, and horrific tableaux: a pile of recently-murdered bodies, bits of flesh still adhering to bones, decomposed darkly in the dusky dank. It was a charnel-house scene that might have driven some individuals of a weaker constitution straight out of their wits. But the Bow street Runners were made of sterner stuff.

They slowly ambled away from the horrific scene, following a set of bloody footprints (Sweeney Todd had, apparently, become lax in his precautions, as is typical with killers who manage to elude the police for very long) , and it led them to a back wall entrance, presumably to the bloody kitchen of Margery Lovett.

What happened next was predictable. Upon learning of the "secret ingredient" of the popular meat pies, an angry mob descended upon the shop of Margery Lovett, and threatened to tear her away and lynch her. The police secreted her to relative safety, but it was to no avail: She eventually ended her life by poison in Newgate Prison.

Her cannibalistic pies had been a favorite of local residents; they were not soon to forget Margery Lovett, and her lingering memory added a special fillip of horror to the sordid saga of Sweeney Todd.

Todd, after a notorious show-trial was hanged, unceremoniously. His legend, though, was preserved in "penny dreadful" magazines, dime novels, on stage, and finally screen, and came to be passed down to future generations in so many different forms that, finally, the original source of the tale--the authentic, true story--was forgotten in the mists of history. Even today, those writers and



composers who dabble in the story of Sweeney Todd, find themselves at a loss to answer for certain if the story is based on a true criminal case. Most simply shrug their shoulders, and claim “Never happened!”

Well, now they know, I suppose.

## Burke and Hare

William Burke and William Hare were two transplanted Irish men who were trying to eke out a subsistence living by running a boarding house in Edinburgh, Scotland. Burke was a large, rough man with a none-too-bright disposition and a slow mind; Hare was a more cunning, vicious fellow, and constituted the “brains” of the duo.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, medical science was vexed, proportionately, with an exploding need to understand the inner-workings of the human body, and also, to comply with the still backward, superstitious religious conviction that tampering with the body of a deceased individual was wholly immoral, and in most cases, also illegal. Thus, the anatomists of these early Victorian times were forced to employ the special services of a particular breed of thug, an unwholesome class of tradesmen usually referred to as “Resurrection Men“. In short: grave robbers.

One of the top anatomists of the time, a Dr. Robert Knox of Edinburgh Medical University, was constantly in need of fresh specimens for his anatomical lectures. By happenstance, the two luckless Irishmen, Burke and Hare, found one day one of their impoverished boarders laying dead in his cot. Vexed (the man had died owing four pounds in arrears for rent, the two men hit upon an idea. Carefully, they loaded the body into a trunk, and took it to the offices of said Dr. Knox, where they were paid handsomely for the prize, and far in excess of what they expected, to boot. Furthermore, they left with the knowledge that the good Doctor would be more than willing to accept such specimens for payment, in the future.

Slowly, a plan began to develop in the reeling, rat-like brains of

*Messieurs* Burke and Hare; a practical solution for their ever-present monetary turmoil. Although they stiffened at the prospect of digging up graves to procure bodies (too much work; the penalty, if caught, was too high) , they readily saw that, as two of their living lodgers were also ill, why, it would be nothing short of mercy to help them along a little in their inevitable final illness.

This was accomplished , chiefly, through an act of suffocation which became popularly known, after the case, as ‘burking’: the victims nostrils and mouth were held shut by the large, powerful Burke, while the ever-devious Hare waited in the wings.

Again, the two bodies were hefted to the medical offices of Dr. Knox, where they were purchased, without question, for dissection.

Now the diabolical duo were really in business; never mind the fact that the rest of their lodgers were healthy as horses; Burke and Hare saw this as no special impediment to what they wanted to accomplish. It was simply a matter of luring unsuspecting souls in, plying them with a little brandy, and let Burke do all the work.

Eventually, the duo let their common-law wives in on the scam, and a steady stream of bodies began to disappear from the squalid lodging house, and end up--with no questions asked--on the dissecting-table of Dr. Knox, who was only too happy with his bountiful supply of fresh specimens, and was not about to look a gift corpse in the mouth.

One of the characters that was lured into the Burke and Hare “No-tell Hotel” was a rather luckless Edinburgh street personality by the name of “Daft Jamie” who, as good as his name, was mentally impaired in the extreme. A surviving drawing of him casts him with the same slack-jawed visage that was commonly used to portray those who suffered from the illness of chronic masturbation. Daft Jamie, lured into the Burke and Hare snare, never showed his slack-jawed visage again, and afterwards, his presence was, oddly enough, missed.

People started to become a little suspicious at all the mysterious disappearances.

The end of the fiasco, sixteen corpses later, was the murder of one elderly woman by the name of Mary Docherty. Preceding her

homicide, Burke and Hare had managed to not only kill the cousin of Burke's lover Nelly, but also a twelve-year-old boy who, unlike the others, was disposed of by the rather crude method of being placed across Burke's lap (as if for a spanking), and having his back swiftly broken.

As always, Dr. Knox was prepared to buy the bodies, no questions asked, for the princely sum of sixteen pounds. Burke and Hare were happy men, for a short time.

But Docherty they had not had time to transport. so they rather unceremoniously dumped her beneath a mound of straw on the premises, while they left to attend to other business.

Perhaps, like so many others before and since, they started to believe in the illusion of their own invincibility. This particular affliction, which is rife amongst criminals who evade detection for a long period of time, has led to the eventual downfall of many. But we digress.

The body was found, coincidentally, by one of the other, snooper lodgers, who very quickly alerted the police. It was no time before authorities located the dastardly duo, and secured their detention.

In short order the story came out, implicating not only Burke and Hare (who turned on his former comrade after being offered immunity from prosecution) , but also their women, Nelly McDougall and Maggie Laird, as well as Dr. Knox, who must surely have realized that his particular Resurrection Men were procuring corpses a little too fresh to have just been dug from the craggy earth of the local cemeteries.

Burke was the only one that went to the gallows; his lover Mary was exonerated, but was removed to safety later when an outraged crowd threatened to pull her from prison and lynch her.

Hare, along with his wife Maggie Laird, vanished and were never heard from again. Dr. Knox, though he was never held up to any legal wrongdoing, was nevertheless tried in the court of public opinion.

He was burned, in effigy by an angry mob; afterwards, he made tracks for another part of the world, and was likewise not heard from

again.

Burke, ironically enough, having swung for the crime of killing people so he could sell their bodies to science, was donated to science himself after his execution. His remains can still be viewed by medical students at Edinburgh Medical University, an institution for which William Burke gave the best years of the rest of his life, and where he undoubtedly, forever, belongs.

Burke and Hare found their greatest, most lasting fame as the subject of the screenplay *The Doctor and The Devils* by famed poet Dylan Thomas, which was later made into a film, and Burke of course, lent his name to the ghastly practice which became known as “burking”.

And also, several generations of English children’s playtime would have been far less merry, had it not been for this jaunty, popular jump-rope song:

“Through the close, up the stairs,  
In the house go Burke and Hare!  
Burke’s the butcher, Hare’s the thief;  
Knox the boy who buys the beef!”

Funny the sorts of things these kids can dream up.

### The Bloody Benders

It was in Kansas, at the close of the Civil War, that history first became acquainted with the quaint doings of the Family Bender, upright German immigrants who ran a clapboard lodge for tired pioneers.

It was a one room house divided by a large canvas sheet. On one side, the family kept their sleeping quarters. On the other side was the guest room, kitchen, and dining table. It was small, but for tired folks traveling the length and breadth of the Kansas prairie, it must have seemed mighty homey.

Old Man Bender (or John Bender) was a cantankerous old devil, married to a woman ten years or more younger than him, and living with the mentally-impaired son of his wife's former husband, as well as a pulchritudinous daughter who, it was rumored, was having an incestuous relationship with her half-brother.

This being only a small part of her charms, legend has that she was both beautiful and immensely talented, possessing a vast store of knowledge and wit; she was also, reportedly, an accomplished medium, who could call forth spirits, speak in tongues, perform faith healings, and was frequently known to give lectures in the back of small shops concerning the doing and goings of the spirit world.

The typical scenario by which the Bender crime family operated, was to have a weary guest or traveler invited in, fed, made to feel comfortable and at home, while the great oafish son waited behind the canvas curtain, ready with a sledgehammer. The victim would, invariably, be convinced to sit in the "hot-seat", almost certainly by the so-charming daughter Katie, and then her brother would proceed to bash in the brains of the man as soon as an opportunity to had presented itself.

Then, the body would be dragged back behind the sheet, atop a waiting trap, and then would be dropped into a pit, where the throat would then be slit by Old Man Bender, to assure that death had actually taken place.

A short walk out back after dark, and the bodied could be buried in a stand of trees; unnoticed, and so it would remain, for the next year and a half.

The Benders, by all accounts, were doing very well for themselves; already they had amassed quite a considerable amount of money in stolen possessions, and many of the victims had been carrying considerable amounts of cash, it seemed, right before they had had the misfortune to happen on the Bender's deadly dwelling.

Eventually, though (as always is the case) their fortune turned for the worst; the Bender's had the personal misfortune of inviting a certain Dr. William H. York to stay at their humble abode; as might already be guessed, he did not live to see the morning.

He had been traveling en route to his home from Fort Surrat, Kansas, and his brother, a military man, in short order became concerned at the long-delay of his sibling, organized a search party, which eventually found their way to the doorstep of Old Man Bender, and his queer family. Though they tried, with every measure of their being, to stave off his concerns with professions of ignorance, and undeniable charm, he proceeded on his way not entirely convinced of their ignorance as to his missing brother's whereabouts.

And, at that point at least, so were many of the neighbors of the Benders. Sergeant York, his suspicions aroused by accounts from local people that the benders had, suddenly and mysteriously, left their property, including animals, and disappeared. Returning in haste to the Bender property, Sergeant York began to explore the premises, and did not like what he found.

Upon discovering the killing pit, which had become foul with dried blood, Sergeant York and his posse went out into the orchards behind the former Bender residence, and began to poke in the exposed earth; recent torrential rains had revealed the presence of several freshly-dug spots approximating graves.

After thrusting a metal rod into the moist earth, the men were not surprised to pull the instruments back and discover them clotted with blood and bits of human gore. It was a short time later that eight bodies were retrieved from the shallow graves; seven full-grown adults, and a baby girl.

Apparently, this child had been killed as an afterthought; it had been tossed into the grave of it's parent, and buried alive.

The end of the Bender saga is not a happy one; or, perhaps it is, depending on your particular point of view, although this author would like to assume that everyone reading his words, presently, is a perfectly sane, rational, and altogether moral individual. But we digress.

Various lynch mobs went into the surrounding areas, in search of the escaped, murderous family. It was all to no avail; although rumor had it that they had been sighted and lynched in locations as far-

removed as Texas and Michigan, these tales all proved to be little-more than fruitless gossip.

The Benders disappeared, literally, without a trace; one wonders, or really assumes, that they found a more suitable environment in which to ply their peculiar family trade.

### The Deacon of Death

What might possess a good, God-fearing young man to commit acts so heinous, so barbarous, that their very commission becomes a testament to the awesome, subtle evil that can work within the heart of even the most righteous, morally-upright of individuals?

Would the power of strong drink, of opium--mixed with a restless, agitated sexual perversion--be sufficient to bend the psyche of a common, placid man, until he acts out the buried savagery that is part and parcel of his genetic heritage as a child of humanity?

Only the terrible tale of Thomas Piper can give us some hint of what motivates a seemingly-normal young man, a seemingly righteous man, to stoop to such monstrous barbarity.

Mr. Piper's first victim, the luckless female servant Bridget Landregan, and followed her to the outskirts of Boston on that fateful day of December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1873. Secured upon his person, and hidden beneath the folds of his great black coat, was a giant club with which he intended to bludgeon the woman.

After assaulting, and dragging her body into some nearby bushes, Piper was soon dismayed to hear of some people approaching down the roadway. Too frightened to commence raping the corpse of his victim, he quickly fled the scene, but unsatisfied with his interruption, he quickly commenced to secure another victim in the person of Mary Sullivan. This time, he was able to complete an act of rape.

He then commenced to celebrate his outlandish victories with a dollop of opium, and a quart of fresh whiskey; such are the small luxuries of some men's lives.

His duties at his Baptist church were small, but included some

minimal supervision over the state of the building, and ringing the bell; the latter he held to be his favorite occupation, as the great resounding clang of the bell called men with a heavy heart to worship, and repentance.

One can be forgiven for wondering just what sort of repentance Mr. Piper might have felt he himself was in need of obtaining; if any.

After a short amount of time, and with the heady rush of murder mixed with the relative ease of escape still brewing in his icy veins, Thomas Piper befriended a local prostitute; ostensibly to save her soul, although the unfortunate harlot may have accorded the method proffered by the unorthodox Thomas Piper as being, well, somewhat peculiar, if not downright shameful.

After utilizing her services one evening, and still feeling unsatisfied, he awoke next to the sleeping woman, and stealing into the darkness, brought forth a heavy hammer which he had briefly deigned to borrow from the church storeroom, and then bludgeoned the whore until brains and blood splattered the walls and ceiling of the cheap hotel in which they were staying.

He escaped into the night, and although the woman was found still, barely, living, she died a short time later.

Thomas Piper, righteous churchgoer that he was, had now killed brutally three times.

He managed to swear off his peculiar urges for very nearly a year, before the hideous longing rose up in him again. He devised a plan, oddly-enough, which centered around the one truly-satisfying aspect of his job with his Baptist church: the ringing of the bell.

The belfry was a nice, secluded room that few people besides himself ever entered, so one fine day, while espying a particularly cheery little maiden named Mabel Young walking toward him in the deserted church vestibule, he tempted the child to accompany him up the ladder to the church belfry, under the promise that she would be able to “feed the pigeons”.

It was only a short time later, having ascended to the belfry with Mabel Young following, Thomas Piper grabbed a cricket bat out of a darkened corner, and bludgeoned the innocent child senseless.



This final murder was his fatal error. Within moments, he became aware of a general commotion in the church beneath him, as a grieving, anxious mother and several other people began to search the premises for little Mabel. Panicking, and perhaps still under the influence of strong drink or narcotics, Thomas Piper proceeded to crawl from the belfry window, to the over-arching branches of an adjacent tree, and drop to the ground. He then bolted, badly, having perhaps sprained his ankle in the fall.

Unfortunately, no fewer than two individuals witnessed his bizarre, broad daylight escape attempt, and quickly informed the authorities. It was only a short time later that Thomas Piper was in custody.

Mabel Young died of her wounds; Thomas Piper was charged with her murder. His only defense was that the killing had been accidental, as he claimed profusely that he had simply cocked the trap open with his bat to secure the ventilation of the belfry room, and that the whole assemblage, bat and all, had fallen back on the girl as she climbed in after him. The jury sat slack-jawed in disbelief.

Thomas Piper was sentenced to swing.

His lawyer, a great, burly man named Edward P. Brown, was loyal to him, and trying desperately in a last-ditch attempt to find some sort of evidence that might convince the judge, at the very least, to have his client's sentence commuted to life imprisonment, began to read zealously the court transcripts and testimony, looking for some sort of fresh angle from which to appeal for mercy.

Instead, much to the dismay of his condemned client, Mr. Brown began to gravely doubt the veracity of his client's claims, and visiting him one night in jail, began to strongly interrogate him concerning his unusual version of events.

To his surprise, not only did Thomas H. Piper break down in tears, confessing entirely to the murder of Mabel Young, but he likewise, for the first time, provided full and startling details as to his murder of the other women : Sullivan, Tynam, and Landregan.

His only defense for his actions involved the use of narcotics and heavy alcohol, which he claimed, he took in large quantities to "still

the pain and anguish” that often afflicted his mind.

Such feelings were stilled for him, permanently, on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1876, when he was hung by the neck at Charles Street Jail, until dead.

History does not tell us who replaced him as church bell-ringer.

### Jack the Ripper

Jack the Ripper needs no introduction: his names is legendary, the inspiration for countless fictional retellings, and endless speculation. In the decades following his awesome wave of terror, his status as the most well-known (if not especially, the most prolific) serial killer was secured first in the pages of “penny dreadful” thrillers, and then upon stage, screen, comics, radio, television, and in an endless succession of paperback “whodunits” , all of which offered their own special theory as to the real identity of this elusive, predatory night-prowler.

To offer any theories or engage in any conjecture as to the “real” identity of Jack the Ripper is quite beyond the scope of the present author; however, no book of true, historical criminal profiles would be complete without the inclusion of Whitechapel’s deathless fiend.

The years following the industrial revolution were bleak ones for the people of East London; living conditions for the poor and needy were abominable, women frequently sold themselves into prostitution at an early age, and alcoholism was the norm.

In this unsettling environment, murder was not rare; although (and this perhaps was the reason that the Ripper killings struck such an intense chord) , motiveless, *multiple* murder was almost unheard of.

The first victim--the first verifiable victim--of Red Jack, was the alcoholic prostitute Mary Ann “Polly” Nichols, whose body was discovered at 3:45 A.M. on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1888. The unknown assailant had viciously slashed the throat, and left a jagged, open cut in the abdomen. He had then escaped into the darkness of the gas-lighted East London streets, apparently unconcerned with the possibility of discovery.

Although the ferociousness of the brutal slaying must have given the police some amount of pause, it was not until eight days later, when the killer struck again, that they became dimly aware that they had a potentially difficult situation brewing.

“Dark” Annie Chapman, a particularly unappealing prostitute, had been slain in much the same manner as the first victim, with the possible exception that, at this point, the killer had graduated to an actual evisceration of the body; the intestines had been pulled outside the body, and the sexual organs had been mutilated.

The body was found in a vacant lot; a sort of “yard” behind a tenement dwelling. It was surrounded by an odd assortment of loose change, and the personal possessions had, apparently, been rifled, though nothing was stolen. Again, there was not a single witness, and no real evidence.

The public, already brooding with resentment and general frustration at their sorry economic lot, and what they perceived (rightly) to be the lack of concern for their community by those of “a higher station”, became greatly antagonized at the lack of progress in the official investigation, instead forming their own “Whitechapel Vigilance Committee”, a loose-assemblage that threatened, at times, to take on the aspects of a lynch mob.

Meanwhile, as the official authorities dissembled as to what the solution should be (they were, in fact, divided as to jurisdiction, some of the murders having happened outside the City of London proper, in London Town), the killer struck again in a climactic night of savagery that has become regarded in the annals of Ripperology as the “Double Event”.

Jack’s first kill of the evening was the luckless “Long Liz”, Elizabeth Stride, another “fallen woman” whose alcoholism had dragged her downward into economic ruin and moral turpitude. He had apparently, approached her as a prospective client, then quickly dispatched her. However, as he began his standard mutilation, he found that the approaching footsteps of local pub-crawlers interrupted him. Most likely cursing his luck, he escaped quickly into the night, leaving his grisly handiwork behind as a calling-card.

His taste for blood not yet sated, he quickly proceeded to hunt out another victim, and within the space of an hour, found a winning candidate in the form of the miserable, drunken Catherine Eddowes.

His butchery of her was a ghastly step-up from his previous work; it was as if, whether out of desperation or anger at being thwarted in his mutilation of “Long Liz”, he proceeded to erase the human features of Catherine Eddowes in a manic explosion of pent-up, homicidal urge.

Her facial features were badly mutilated; her nose was hacked to bits, her internal organs were viciously ripped asunder, her sexual organs were likewise mutilated, and part of a kidney was removed. The killer then ripped a piece of her dingy apron to clean off his knife, and left the scene quickly.

Her entrails, indecently, had been cast over one shoulder. The killer had utilized a zigzag cut from Eddowes genitalia to the center of her breasts, and her ears had likewise been mutilated; it was a stunning example of frustrated overkill.

The body had been found lying in Mitre Square, and Eddowes had apparently been seen talking with a tall “foreign-looking” gentleman, described as being in his late thirties, just moments before.

That the euphemism “foreign-looking” was interpreted by some as meaning “Jewish”, did nothing to alleviate the fears caused by the next startling find of the police.

Nearby, chalked up on the wall of a dripping alley, were the unmistakable words:

*The Jews are the Men that Will Not be blamed for Nothing*

Or something to that effect. There is a certain amount of argument as to spelling, wording, and capitalization, but the writing was unmistakable the work of Jack the Ripper. Below, they found a bloodied piece of the apron that Catherine Eddowes had been wearing when she had been killed.

However, there is no way to authenticate the spelling or exact

wording of this cryptic message, as it was ordered to be scrubbed from the wall by terrified authorities, who feared it might spark an anti-Semitic riot.

Through the decades though, this mysterious cryptogram has figured prominently in the various winding conspiracy theories concerning the true identity of Jack the Ripper. The heavily-loaded (and, admittedly creatively-spelled) word “Juwes” has suggested to researchers everything from a *Shochet*--a Jewish kosher butcher--to “Jubela, Jubelo, and Jubelum”, the three characters in Freemasonic lore that are said to have killed Hiram Abiff for not giving them the “Mason Word” (which, incidentally, is *Mahabone*).

This connection with that popular fraternal organization and catalyst for conspiracy-mongering, Freemasonry, is one that would be exploited increasingly by “Ripperologists” over the next several decades; most suggest that the ritualistic killings inflicted on the unfortunate women were consistent with the strange punishments that Masons are threatened with if they should ever betray a Brother Mason.

Some of these theories have attempted to weave a grand conspiracy involving Freemasons, the British Royal Family, the Zionist movement, Bolshevism, Satanism , Aliester Crowley, etc, etc, etc, ad infinitum.

There are, conceivably, more theories regarding the true identity of Jack the Ripper today--where the probability of actually ascertaining the truth of the matter is , barring some divine revelation, virtually nil--than at any other time in history.

Something must be said, of course, about the numerous letters received by the London police from a variety of different sources, nearly all of which were ascertained to be nothing more than the work of frauds. Such was not the case with a letter received September 27<sup>th</sup> , generally referred to as the “Dear Boss” letter:

*Dear Boss,*

*I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they wont fix me just yet. I have laughed when they look so clever and talk about being on the right track. That*

*joke about Leather Apron gave me real fits. I am down on whores and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled. Grand work the last job was. I gave the lady no time to squeal. How can they catch me now. I love my work and want to start again. You will soon hear of me with my funny little games. I saved some of the proper red stuff in a ginger beer bottle over the last job to write with but it went thick like glue and I cant use it. Red ink is fit enough I hope ha. ha. The next job I do I shall clip the ladys ears off and send to the police officers just for jolly wouldn't you. Keep this letter back till I do a bit more work, then give it out straight. My knife's so nice and sharp I want to get to work right away if I get a chance. Good Luck.*

*Yours truly*

*Jack the Ripper*

*Dont mind me giving the trade name*

*PS Wasnt good enough to post this before I got all the red ink off my hands curse it No luck yet. They say I'm a doctor now. ha ha*

This letter was, originally, thought to be just another cruel joke, and, indeed, there are Ripperologists today who dismiss it as just that. However, a later postcard was in the same hand, and made reference to a “double event” that had not, at that point taken place. The small note below was, almost certainly, written by Jack the Ripper:

*I was not coddling dear old Boss when I gave you the tip, you'll hear about Saucy Jacky's work tomorrow double event this time number one squealed a bit couldn't finish straight off. ha not the time to get ears for police. thanks for keeping last letter back till I got to work again.*

*Jack the Ripper*

As distressing as this brazen confession was, and as impossible as it was to ascertain who it was that might be sending them (was it the killer himself, or an accomplice?), the next, infamous package, received by George Lusk of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee had to top the list of gruesome games played by a killer that any of the authorities had yet to have the displeasure of encountering.

*From hell.*

*Mr Lusk,*

*Sor*

*I send you half the Kidne I took from one woman and prasarved it for you tother  
piece I fried and ate it was very nise. I may send you the bloody knif that took it  
out if you only wate a whil longer*

*signed*

*Catch me when you can Mishter Lusk*

The letter was sent in a box containing half of a preserved human kidney. Like the half of a kidney that had been removed by the killer from Catherine Eddowes, it was from someone that had been suffering Bright's Disease. There was, of course, no way at the time to try and ascertain if it really *was* the kidney belonging to Eddowes.

If the police were impotent, the killer proved himself a demonically capable miscreant. His finale killing, his last hurrah, was the killing of prostitute Mary Jane Kelly, in her own room, which was done at his leisure.

The body was butchered in an appalling manner; the face was ripped to shreds, the intestines were cut out and splayed upon the blood-soaked bed, the legs were opened and the genitalia were mutilated; the breasts were cut off, and set next to the body on a nightstand.

The body was nearly decapitated.

It was a horrific grotesque scene; upon discovery, a terrified boy who had been peeping through the broken pane of the front window of the dismal doss-house room, fled in terror for police. The resulting photograph of the victim was so grotesque that it was rarely seen for afterwards, for years, until standards for realism demanded it to be reprinted in various books and articles.

Kelley had been living with Joseph Barnett, a fish porter with a peculiar, stuttering pattern of speech, who, apparently, had become incensed with a lesbian affair Mary was having with a fellow prostitute. He had violently ejected the women from the small room (really just a bedroom with a fireplace and washtub) where the three

of them had been staying, and only relented to have Mary Kelly come back again out of pity.

Obviously, he did her no real favor by doing this.

With the murder of Mary Jane Kelly the public outcry against the failed police efforts rose to a fever pitch, but the needn't have worried: Jack had, apparently, decided to move on.

Although Inspector Abberline, the on-the-ground-detective who did most of the heavy footwork related to the case, would remark in later years that he felt, personally, that the ripper had been a mad Polish Jew named Kosminski, who had made a habit of walking the streets muttering to himself and eating things from the gutter until being confined in Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum, the list of suspects would grow over the next decades to include royalty, Russian agents, mad midwives, beastly butchers (of the occupational variety), sinister Satanists, psychopathic syphilitics, demented doctors, and even outer space aliens.

One promising suspect, often-repeated suspect is the suicided schoolmaster Montague John Druitt, who bore a striking resemblance to certain eyewitness descriptions of the killer, and who had, apparently, been dismissed from his job as an instructor at an all-boys school, for alleged “improprieties”, whatever that term is meant to imply.

Most seem to think, probably correctly, it implies he was a pederast.

At any rate, his body washed up on the shores of the Thames, and he found lasting notoriety as a cornerstone suspect of this striking, enigmatic case.

Of course, whoever Jack the Ripper really was, one thing remains for certain: he will live on, seemingly indefinitely, in the pages of true-crime books, horror films, television specials, plays, comics, games, and even rock music; every year, visitors flock to London to take the “Jack the Ripper Tour”, guided by a man dressed in a black cloak, and a top hat.

Every year, a new slew of books surfaces, each claiming to have the one, undeniable, final solution to the ghastly crimes perpetrated



by an unknown personage, in 1888.

As for Jack himself, he disappeared into the London fog following that strange Autumn of Terror, and was never seen again.

### The French Ripper

Joseph Vacher was a young man born of an extremely poor family: he was one of fifteen children, and spent the vast majority of his childhood days simply scrounging for enough to eat. As one can well imagine, he was probably as starved for parental affection and warmth as he was for common food.

To escape his life of penury, Vacher joined the army, and proved to be a somewhat poor specimen of military decorum. Hence, his options for promotion were slow in coming. This so enraged the budding psychopath that, one balmy night, he grabbed his saber, and attempted to slit his throat from ear to ear. There would be many folks, later on, that could have wished him nothing but success with this undertaking, but , in fact, the attempt failed to kill him. What it did ensure for him was a short stay in a sanitorium, and a new awareness on the part of his commanding officers that Joseph vacher was not an altogether mentally sound individual.

It was some short time later that he began his first flirtations with rape. Not being a success at wooing the attentions of a certain young woman, he quickly grabbed his service revolver and attempted to shoot her. When she lived through his homicidal tantrum, he turned the gun on himself, shooting himself in his eye, and permanently damaging the muscles in his face so that he would suffer, to the end of his short, miserable days, with partially paralyzed facial features.

Quickly discharged from the military after another stay in a mental ward, Joseph Vacher now found himself in the unenviable position of being a deformed ex-soldier and vagrant with a burning psychopathic rage, and nothing to tether him , whatsoever, to any societal conventions. He took to wandering, and leaving corpses in his wake wherever he went.

All in all , Joseph Vacher's atrocities would encompass seven

women and four young men, all of them subjected to gross mutilation and necrophilia shortly after expiring due to his monster's rage. His horrible killing spree, and his close proximity in history and geography to his notorious British cousin Jack, would forever brand him with the sobriquet of the "French Ripper", although, truth be told, he outdistanced his English counterpart by a considerable yard, if the conventional wisdom of crime historians are to be believed.

He did serve three months upon commencing with a rape attempt, a sordid assault on a woman collecting pine cones in a forest, not counting on the fact that her husband was nearby. After subduing the bloodthirsty tramp, they both alerted the authorities and Vacher was arrested. The ironic aspect of this was that, initially, though Vacher wrote a long letter to the Judge of his case, confessing to his crimes, being judged "insane", he was initially not believed.

It would take another long trail of dead before the authorities would again come to behold the sordid, paralyzed visage of the filthy spree killer with a taste for mutilation and necrophilia. This time, he was finally committed to their custody permanently, and was thusly examined by a team of alienists headed by the eminent Dr. Alexandre Lacassagne, decided he was sane, and therefore fit to stand trial.

He did, so, and turned the courtroom into his own personal circus. Perhaps in foreshadowing of the sort of courtroom hysterics that would be proffered, later by Manson and Bundy, Vacher played the part of a lunatic all the way to the gallows. At one point, he jumped up in the middle of court, exclaiming, "Glory to Jesus! Glory to Joan of Arc! Glory to the great martyr of our time! Glory to the great savior!"

He was raving all the way to the gallows, where he was hanged on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1898, at the age of twenty-nine years.

### Belle Gunness

*Belle Gunness was a lady fair,  
From Indiana state;  
She weighed about three hundred pounds,*

*And that is quite some weight.*

The story of Belle Gunness is one that is familiar to the great majority of true-crime enthusiasts who are forever in search of some classic atrocity to ruminate and obsess over. A short recounting of the Belle Gunness mystery will serve to enlighten those not privileged to have ever heard it before.

Belle Gunness was a large, homely spinster of Norwegian ancestry who made her living by advertising in “lonely hearts” columns for marriageable men desperate to settle down with a friendly, accommodating woman.

Of course, Belle, who was stout, flat-faced, and had roughly the build of a small professional wrestler, may not have quite been what these individuals had in mind.

It was a small matter, though, if Belle’s physical graces did not live up to the expectations of those luckless souls who came to call on her at her hog farm in La Porte. These gentlemen would not, after all, be around long enough to tire of the homely visage and the gray demeanor of their sordid paramour. For the would-be lovers seldom lived to see the next sunrise.

Belle, who many regard as America’s first legitimate female serial killer (Aileen Wuornos notwithstanding) began her grisly endeavors in 1908.

Her first victim was, quite possibly, her husband Peter Gunness. After toiling one day at butchering hogs, an enormous meat grinder slipped from a shelf and pulverized his skull. The local coroner cried “foul play!”, but it did little good: Belle was exonerated by an incredulous jury of any wrongdoing in her husband’s death.

Having now at her disposal a relatively large, private area in which to ply her strange new trade, she wasted no time in securing the services of a local alcoholic handyman to both maintain the farm and tend to whatever other additional responsibilities as might be required of him. One of these we know was sex.

The other area of responsibility entrusted to Mr. Lamphere was far more sordid: He was to be the masculine half of the Belle

Gunness Lonely Hearts Club Killers, and it was a role he took to as easily as tossing back cheap hooch, or slopping hogs.

The eventual number of murdered men who made the misfortunate mistake of traveling to the Gunness farm in search of a spouse is estimated to be around fourteen. The Modus Operandi, which was in effect up until the very end of the sorry saga, had Belle running out of the house to greet her new beau. He would, presumably, be less-than-enthusiastic upon first catching sight of her, but would remain as tolerably polite as was possible under the circumstances. Joe Lamphere, the drunken handyman, would then strut from the house and out onto the porch, peeling an apple and looking pensive. Belle would offer apologies to the jilted suitor, telling him that Belle had decided that Ray lamp here was the love of her life, and that she was deeply regretful for having the gentleman come all the way to Laporte just to be told his romantic interest was marrying someone else.

Although in many cases, this may have actually relieved the man in question rather than infuriate him, Belle nonetheless continued with the contrite charm, inviting the man to dinner and a nap before he set out again to return home still a bachelor.

The man, typically thankful for just a short respite from the backbreaking travel, readily assented, and in coming inside the home was greeted with a sizeable table full of sumptuous home cooking. As he bit into the roasted pork, or savored the potatoes, he would in short order notice a rather strange, bitter under taste that, while not seriously impinging upon the enjoyment of the dinner, did grow substantially less tolerable as the meal progressed. Later, perhaps reclining in a chair having an after-dinner smoke, he would begin to feel dizzy and “not quite right”. He would then fall into a deep swoon, from which he never awoke.

It was Joe Lamphere who handled the really dirty business of crushing the heads and dismembering the bodies. Whatever money and possessions as could be found on the individual's person were soon rifled, and became the property of Mrs. Gunness. Later, Joe could offer fresh meat to hungry hogs, the swine grown spoiled from

such delectably fresh vittles.

Of course, there were times when the M.O. was slightly altered. Belle seemed to have a nose for money, and when she hooked a fresh prospect, she was willing to string him along abit, so as to reap as much financial benefit as she could. Often, she would write in advance, letting each besotted male know that she was, badly, in need of money. Sums of up to one thousand dollars were, according to later testimony sent to Belle, from men who sincerely thought they had finally found the answer to their long, lonely existence.

The most troubling, astonishing thing was the fact that while Belle was busily engaged in this bloody undertaking, she also managed to rear three children, all of whom were apparently oblivious to the goings-on in their own home. They would each share the same unhappy fate.

All went along fairly well for Belle, until finally she happened upon a prospect the likes of which would come back to seal her fate. It was a man named Hegelian who presented himself at the Gunness residence as the final suitor. He too disappeared in a small amount of time.

A fire gutted the Gunness residence shortly after, and it was assumed by the town folk of La Porte, as well as the esteemed Sheriff Smutzer, that Belle had perished therein, along with her three children. Joe Lamphere, who was immediately arrested under suspicion of arson, if not murder, confessed a string of horrors too bizarre for the imaginations of the law enforcement officers who sat spellbound, as he talked through the night.

One thing was for certain, he made clear to them: Belle Gunness was not dead , but her children were. The body that was moldering in the morgue belonged not to Belle Gunness , but to a prostitute from Chicago whom Belle had lured to her home under the pretence of a lesbian attraction. As for Belle, she had promised to come and be off with him after the fire was set and the evidence destroyed. Evidently, she had not been faithful to the luckless Lamphere, and so he would swing in her stead.

Indeed, it took only a short examination to determine that the

badly burned corpse was not that of the short, stout Belle. It was too tall, and not of sufficient weight. However, what must have interested the police more than the obvious substitution of a single corpse, was the small cemetery of bodies and pieces of bodies they later unearthed from her property.

And what of Belle? She disappears into the fabric of criminal lore. Some had her a whorehouse madam in Chicago; others suggested she had left for California, or sighted her as far away as Paris. As to her earthly whereabouts and remains, we can only hazard a guess.

However, citizens of La Porte will swear to you , against all logic, that the spirit of Belle Gunness has returned to her former property, perhaps to keep a matronly eye on the development and use of her blood-soaked soil.

The house that now stands where once Belle butchered men has its own bizarre goings-on, with freak electrical occurrences, televisions and computers that turn on and off by themselves, strange creaking footsteps, and phantasmal “friends” that like to keep company with small children. Workmen recently contracted to remodel after a freak fire, reported eerie feelings, chilling cold-spots, levitating ladders, and objects that would vanish, only to reappear in the most bizarre of places.

But the most astonishing reports come from those who have driven along dark McClung road , and seen standing in the light of a full moon the figure of a large, menacing woman dressed in old fashioned garb, waiting like a lost soul in the shifting shadows.

Some accounts speak of the frightening phantom chasing them; of the sickening scream of a murdered man sounding out across the fields in the darkness. Some say the black garbed woman cackles maniacally in the night, still gleeful at the ease with which she made her escape after killing so many men.

Some say these things, and some may even believe them. As to the objective truth concerning Belle Gunness and her ghost, only God knows for certain.

## Lizzie Borden

Lizzie Borden may have been a number of things; she may even, as far as we know, have been a killer.

But there was one thing Lizzie was not that we know almost for certain: she was no *serial* killer.

That is, a serial killer must, by definition, kill three or more victims over an extended period time, out of a need for personal gratification or to satisfy some unknown inner-drive that seems to compel them forward.

Lizzie is more correctly labeled as a mass-murderer, in that all of her victims were dispatched in a single, blinding stroke of unmitigated rage and fury.

And, to be quite honest, some are not altogether sure she was even that.

Lizzie is included amongst the other august personages in this little tome chiefly because, to do otherwise, would deprive the reader of a thorough, and complete portrait of Victorian murder. The Borden case is, technically, one of histories unsolved crimes, Lizzie having been acquitted of the foul deed after a revealing trial that left little doubt, at least in the public's mind, as to the guilt of the accused party.

It was a bitterly hot day, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1892, when Andrew Borden a prominent local businessman, was found with his head chopped inward, one eye slit open, reclining on the sofa of his own comfortable home. The resultant crime-scene photos are still, to this very day, gruesome and shocking stuff.

Blood spattered the wall in heavy washes, and whoever the killer was, the individual had, apparently, surprised Mr. Borden while resting, and dispatched him with merciless fury.

His body was discovered, by Lizzie Borden, no less, at eleven o'clock. According to testimony, the maid Bridget Sullivan had been upstairs napping when Lizzie had called to her from below, "Bridget! Bridget, come quick! Someone's killed father!"

It was no long amount of time before the body of Lizzie's

stepmother, Abby Durfee Borden, was discovered in an upstairs bedroom. She had apparently died while bending over to make the bed in the guest room.

Her head was nearly decapitated; the suspected murder weapon, in both cases, was an axe or the smaller hatchet. Quickly the police were summoned to the appalling scene, and photographs were taken, while investigators pondered the sordid mess before them.

The initial suspects were, unremarkably, the Irish-born maid Sullivan, and an uncle that had been staying with the Borden's at the time. However, since both of these individuals were full-equipped with airtight alibis, and neither had any particular motive for slaying either of the unfortunate Bordens, the aura of suspicion soon fell on Lizzie herself. Her sister, Emma, having been away visiting friends, escaped inquiry, although it was not always to remain so.

A spectacular and highly-publicized trial followed, and revealed the roots of tension that many felt must surely implicate the stoic Lizzie Borden as being the perpetrator of the foul deed of parricide. That Lizzie was not well-disposed toward her stepmother, that she feared a possible disinheriting, that she had, oftentimes, borne the brunt of her father's stern, disapproving temperament, seemed to suggest that she might be holding some smouldering passions for revenge.

One of the most bizarre incidents in the Borden case involves the consuming, over several days, of a mutton stew, the likes of which had become, after sitting for several days in the cupboard, a rather noxious, thick paste that the family found to be indigestible. It mattered little to Mr. Borden, who always insisted that waste brought want. The bitter feud over this forced meal was one of the incidents pointed to as a growing bone of contention between the Borden sisters and their parents.

Another striking incident was the revelation that, only a short time before the murders, Lizzie Borden consulted a local Fall Creek pharmacist in the hopes of obtaining a supply of deadly prussic acid, ostensibly to clean a damaged dress. With this revelation, during the trial, that Lizzie had been actively trying to obtain poison, the



Prosecution's case against her seemed, for a time, dead set. But there were even further revelations to come.

Lizzie had, apparently, been seen only a short time after the murders, attempting to burn a dress that had become stained, she claimed, by brown paint. When consulted about this, she had little in the way of any justification for such an extreme method of ridding herself of an undesirable piece of clothing. After all, the dress could have been repaired by some other means, or could have been dismembered to use as scrap cloth.

There was no reason to burn even a badly-damaged dress; no reason, of course, unless Lizzie thought the dress could, eventually, be used as evidence against her.

The strange lack of a murder weapon was soon solved by the discovery, in the barn in back of the house, of an ash-covered hatchet, the handle of which had apparently been destroyed. The head of the hatchet fitted perfectly into the gaping wound on Mr. Borden's skull, and it seemed, at least, that whoever the murderer was, he had taken the time to even dispose of the weapon by hiding it at the scene of the crime!

This seemed a most curious, and telling development.

It was all to no end, however. The jury, unable to convince themselves that the pretty, chubby former Sunday School teacher had managed to cave in her father's head with an axe, and, likewise, nearly decapitate her stepmother, voted for acquittal. Lizzie walked out of the courtroom a free woman, and walked into the pages of history and folklore, "guilty as charged".

There have been numerous accounts of the Borden case, and dozens of books written about, or partly about, the great "unsolved" double murder of Fall Creek, Massachusetts. Most of them point out the obvious: Lizzie Borden was a disturbed young woman from a stern, loveless household that decided to, one day, unburden herself of her anger and grief, and kill her father and stepmother.

As for Lizzie herself, she took her inheritance and invested well, living out the remainder of her days in a posh house in an affluent area of Fall Creek. She maintained a stoical silence to the end of her

days, living out her role as a legend and curiosity as best she could.

In a final, hilarious twist (one that, perhaps Lizzie herself might have gleaned a chuckle from) , the former Borden home in Fall Creek was turned , after the passages of some years, into a successful “Bed and Breakfast” establishment, that is, reportedly haunted.

Visitors the to the establishment have reported hearing strange wailing and moaning at night, have reported the sound of two women arguing, and have even claimed to see a ghostly woman walking about in the creeping darkness of the old Victorian house.

One incident even has a ghost climbing into bed with a luckless couple!

And, on that note, we can leave Lizzie to rest in peace, for the remainder of this book.

### H.H. Holmes

*In conclusion, I wish to say that I am but a very ordinary man ... and to have planned and executed the stupendous amount of wrongdoing that has been attributed to me would have been wholly beyond my power.--Dr. H.H. Holmes*

The career of Herman Webster Mudgett, better known during his lifetime by the alias H.H. Holmes, is one that defies credulity and, were it not truth, would be labeled the basest example of literary invention. The very details of the case itself: bigamy, fraud, theft, medical malpractice, and the construction of a huge, poorly-built, ‘murder castle’ during the World’s Fair of 1893 , render the full range of Holmes’ diabolical capability something to, truly, shudder at.

The early years of his life, spent as an outcast, overly-intelligent, sulky boy under the tutelage of his stern, outwardly loveless parents, could hardly have provided a better background to the sordid development of a young man that would, in time, be regarded as America’s first “serial killer”.

There was, admittedly, something always “wrong” about young Mudgett: he was known to be a strange, brooding, maladaptive little

tyro, whose chief interest, beside torturing small pets to death and dissecting them, seemed to be dominating his mentally-slower peers and abusing them as a game of sport; or at the very least, taking unfair advantage of them.

This early activity as a scoundrel laid the groundwork for the rest of his life, for he would, within the space of a few years, graduate to acts of forgery, fraud, and insurance scam.

He would finally earn his highest degree of proficiency the art of murder

Some of his earliest humbuggery revolved around the acquisition of phony patents for the sale of machines, the function of which, typically, could not be credited with the claims made against them. Also, it is reported that snake-oil and phony nostrums were not, altogether, out of his league, and most of appealed to the pretensions of a young man that would, in time, graduate from medical college a legitimate doctor.

He was not, for long, to remain one.

Medical school, undertaken right before his several bigamous marriages got underway, must have opened up a new facet of his distorted psyche, allowing his to confirm, outwardly, the inner contempt he felt for the rest of his fellow creatures . Here, in the darkened sanctity of the dissection chamber, he could autopsy cadavers at his leisure, coldly cutting free the skin, and fat, and inner organs of the deceased, and fondling them in wonder, amazed at the utilitarian nature of each and every fibrous molecule of the body. It was here, (indeed, it *must* have been here) while he was surrounded at the university morgue by the decayed remnants of life, that he first began to view the world through the pathological prism of the psychopathic killer, as well as that of the habitual conman.

One wonders, as he immersed himself in the delicate, and fragile workings of the body, if he ever evidenced any more than a passing recognition of the humanity that the decaying specimens had once represented. If so, it must have been for the last time, because, in future, he would grow to embrace the world of murder for profit with a zeal amounting to vengeance.

Holmes greatest contribution to the world of crime, and his sole contribution to the history of mass murder, was a three story ramshackle building he erected in Chicago, in 1893, to serve as a hotel, primarily for naive young woman who cam to town for the World's Columbia Exposition. It was a, truly, historic event in the life of old Chicago, and brought upwards of thirty million people into the Windy City, swamping local authorities in a deluge of petty crime and graft, and ensuring that H.H. Holmes would have a smorgasbord of grim picking from which to hone his deadly twilight trade into a veritable art form.

Holmes had first hit upon the idea, when, after coming to Chicago, he secured employment as a pharmacist, managing to steal away a small business from Mrs. E.S. Holten, who became enamored of Holmes' good looks and glib tongue. Of course, it was not long before Mrs. Holten and her more cautious daughter, suddenly "disappeared to settle financial matters in another part of the country", and , predictably, were never seen again. We can well-imagine what their fate must have been, for Holmes quickly took over sole proprietorship of the pharmacy at 63<sup>rd</sup> and South Wallace, and immediately set his eyes on larger scams than pushing bottles of "Miracle Elixir" that were largely little more than watered-down booze.

There was a space across the road that caught the apple of his eye, a place more than suitable to carry out the sort of "death factory" endeavor that was slowly taking shape in his mind. In short order, he began to line up a capital series of crimes and swindles to acquire the money to break the dirt, lay the foundation, and begin the arduous task of building what would become, to modern crime historians, the "Holmes Murder Castle".

To complete this task, Holmes found it necessary to employ the services of three separate building crews, all of whom, eventually, found themselves swindled, ultimately, by the financial machinations of the devious Holmes.

That three separate construction crews were employed served to mask the real purpose behind many of the odd architectural features

of the three-story, city-block long building. Why, for instance, gas pipes were required to reach into each separate guest room, why the walls of certain rooms were lined with asbestos, why one room was, essentially, simply a huge vault-like prison.

Accompanying the oddities, was the presence of a remarkable set-up in the basement, which included a mammoth crematory, pits of quicklime in the concrete floor, a massive dissecting table, and a veritable cornucopia of macabre surgical instruments and poisonous chemicals, all ready to effect, for Dr. "Harry Howard Holmes" the supreme, casual, taking of a large swath of human life, for pleasure and profit.

His first victims were culled from the ranks of pretty young women who found themselves hopeful for secretarial work, Unluckily for them, they hit upon the demented Holmes as a possible employer.

His typical *modus operandi* involved immediate sexual advances on the prospective employee, which resulted, much of the time, in the unfortunate young women becoming enthralled with the tall, dashing rake hell. Seducing his prey, offering them the hopes of a prospective marriage after professions of instantaneous "love at first sight", Holmes managed to quicken the pulse of a seemingly endless succession of very naive young women.

After spending the night using his victims sexually, he would creep from bed, and casually walk to his office to retrieve chlorophyll. After sufficiently rendering the young woman unconscious, Holmes would then throw the body into a disused elevator shaft. Then after placing a single pane of glass over the doorway, and forthwith attaching a gas-pumping hose into a single hole, he could at his leisure, watch the awakening mistress suddenly struggle in panic, and then finally succumb to the asphyxiating effects of the gas.

In a few moments, after ventilation had thus assured the gas would be no threat to Holmes himself, he could lasso the girls neck, drag he upward, then dispose of her by means of a greased chute to his basement morgue, thereby proceeding to dismember, cremate, dispose of the remains in quicklime, and steal away to his private

“laboratory” on the third floor, to fondle and “experiment” on whatever parts of the corpse interested him most.

And the payoff in this macabre routine? Besides the sick gratification in wanton murder, it became known, later, that Holmes had coerced a number of the young women to sign over their savings and insurance to him.

The sun began to set on Holmes just a short while later, with the arrival of a young lady from Texas named Minnie Williams,

Minnie was from a wealthy family, but had decided to try Chicago out in the hopes of becoming a shining light of the American stage. When applying for room and board, she chanced, unfortunately, upon the Murder Castle and its monstrous proprietor. It was only a short time later that Holmes convinced her that they should be married.

He also, predictably, encouraged her to sign over all her worldly possessions and holdings to him. For once, a woman had the temerity to say no to Holmes.

He did convince her, however, to contact her sister Nannie in Fort worth, and to have her come and visit her and her successful, prospective husband in Chicago. At first, the strange threesome had a high time on Holmes’ ill-gotten gains, going on shopping sprees and dining in the finest restaurants in Chicago. But all was not to remain wine and roses, for, it was only a short time later that Minnie and Nannie that they ran into, shockingly, an old mutual acquaintance who, when told that Minnie was engaged to a “Doctor Harry H. Holmes”, was astounded to note that she had a friend herself in Wilmette who was married to a Dr. Harry Holmes.

Minnie confronted Holmes, remembering that, indeed, he had bragged at owning property in Wilmette, and it was not long before she put two and two together. The only witness to the ensuing debacle was the building janitor, who despite being locked out of Holmes private world of torture and murder, saw and heard enough to arouse in himself mighty suspicions concerning the strange nature of his employer’s activities.

Holmes, indeed, was married to a woman in Wilmette, as he was

married to a woman in Indiana, and another woman in Philadelphia that he had murdered.

Of course, Nannie and Minnie Williams disappeared shortly after, and so did Holmes, but not before he had set fire to his own sprawling hotel in an attempt to collect on the insurance money. This did not go as planned, however, much to Holmes detriment: too-curious policeman demanded to be allowed to first investigate the ruins of the boarded-up hotel, and Holmes, noticeably alarmed, immediately balked.

When he finally relented, promising to return to the police station later, after having “attended to business affairs”, he simply fled, first heading to Texas to try, once again unsuccessfully, to lay claim to Minnie Williams estate. He was rebuffed by Texas authorities, who demanded to know the cause of Mrs. Williams death, and were highly dubious of honoring such a claim minus the findings of a legitimate inquest. Holmes luck was running out.

His capacity to act intelligently wasn't at it's peak, either. In Texas, in a panic to flee the ever-increasing suspicion of the authorities whom he had incited in the first place with his abrupt appearance as the “husband” of Minnie Williams.

He the committed an egregious blunder, one that was eventually to lead his straight to the waiting gallows, and eternal infamy. He stole a horse in Texas, a state that, at the time, often strung horse thieves by their necks until dead. It was a fate that would, inevitably face Holmes sooner or later, but at this time he fled Texas to Missouri, where he was apprehended in St. Louis on an unrelated crime.

He was sent to jail awaiting trial, and made the acquaintance, while there, of the notorious train robber Marion Hedgepeth. Inquiring to his new-found friend about the securing the services of a crooked lawyer, for which Mr. Hedgepeth was offered a sum of five hundred dollars.

Overjoyed, Hedgepeth wrote a letter to his own lawyer, Jephtha D. Howe, who in short order arranged bail for Holmes (who gave the St. Louis authorities a false name), and awaited his next set of instructions.

A Benjamin Pitezel, a confederate of Holmes who was assistant on many of his private financial scams, had agreed to go to Philadelphia , under the pretence of opening a patent office, and shortly after , was found dead on his back porch, with a badly-burned face. The circumstances of his death were such that the coroner became immediately suspicious at the way the scene had been carefully set-up to make it seem as if Pitezel had self-immolated while lighting his pipe too close to a bottle of flammable chemical.

Obviously, the very notion of that as a plausible means of death, was exceedingly peculiar.

It only took a proper examination of the corpse to ascertain that Pitezel had been poisoned. However, other than the suggestion that the luckless man had committed suicide, the coroner could find no evidence of actual crime, and so was forced to rule the death an accident.

At the same time as this was occurring, lawyer Jephtha D. Howe came forward in Philadelphia, ostensibly representing the widow of the dead man. The insurance company, rightfully mindfull of fraud, pursued another angle--they wrote to the only known client of the Pitezel Patent Office: Dr. Harry Howard Holmes, of Chicago, Illinois.

It did not take Holmes long to make his way to Philadelphia, with one of Pitezel's young children in tow, to identify the body and claim the insurance money. Mrs. Pitezel, herself, was privy to the scam, and had been assured that a dead body would be obtained to substitute for her husband. Then the money would be collected, divided evenly, and all would live happily ever after.

Alas, her illusions were to be short-lived.

Holmes collected the money, and took fourteen-year-old Ben Pitezel with him.

It was at this point that Hedgepeth, realizing that he had, essentially, been conned by Holmes, confessed to the police all that he knew concerning the man with whom he'd made the five hundred dollar deal. A detective named Frank Geyer, fascinated with the tangled doings of the nefarious, ubiquitous "H.H. Holmes" , began



to rapidly trail the man backward, to his state of origins, where he discovered not only that the name H.H. Holmes was simply an alias for Herman Mudgett, but that the sinister man's parents still resided in the family house, and thought very well of their handsome son, who had bamboozled them for years with far-fetched tales of making his living as an "inventor".

It was from the family that he finally tracked Holmes to Boston, where he was with Benjamin Pitezel's wife, but with none of his children. In short order they were both arrested, and Geyer began to sweat a stoic Holmes through relentless interrogation.

Geyer gave Holmes a choice of either returning to Philadelphia with him, or being sent back to Texas to hang for horse thievery. Holmes, predictably chose the later, and when once comfortably stationed in his new, private cell, began to prevaricate with gay abandon.

He at first insisted that Pitezel was in South America, and that the body the police had found was simply a cadaver stolen from a morgue, a nod at his old days of "body-switcher" insurance scams. When Geyer found that unlikely, he then claimed that Pitezel had become despondent, killed himself, and that Holmes had burned the remains in an attempt to make it look like an accident, and collect the insurance.

One great matter distressing Geyer was the fate of the missing Pitezel children, whom Holmes had taken virtually hostage and whom, it was known had been separated and dragged across country on Holmes bizarre itinerary of fraud and murder.

Geyer first tracked down, after much arduous legwork, a house in Indianapolis that Holmes had rented under a fictitious name. It was here, in an old stove, that young Howard Pitezel had been disposed of cruelly, after he had outlived his usefulness to Holmes.

All that remained were ashes, a partial skull, and a few bits of bone.

It was in Toronto, though, were Holmes had taken the two young Pitezel twins, that Geyer discovered, with horror, what had been their unhappy fate.

The Pitezel children had been locked inside a great steamer trunk by the diabolical Holmes, who had then attached a hose to the gas jet, asphyxiating the little twins, and thus ridding himself of the inconvenience of their care.

When confronted with this discovery, Holmes replied with faux outrage, exclaiming, "It was a foul deed! What scoundrel did it?"

By the time it all, finally, erupted into national news, Holmes (or rather Mudgett) had fast-become the most despised murderer in American history, up until that point. A score of *penny-dreadful* pulp publications followed, including the terribly titled book *Sold to Satan, Holmes!: A Poor Wife's Sad Story*, which became an instant, immediate success.

It was largely, however, a piece of utter fiction.

The Holmes-Pitezel story, and the resultant revelations concerning the macabre "Murder Castle" catapulted Herman Webster Mudgett into a strange sort of celebrity the likes of which America had not yet known: The Celebrity Psychopath. Nearly eighty years before Charles Manson first entered world consciousness as a particularly photogenic rogue, Dr. "H.H. Holmes" would become the first ever sordid tabloid sensation. Some must have wondered what had become of society.

Holmes, not to be outdone, managed to pen his own volume, a largely self-exculpatory piece replete with dissembling, half-truths, and outright balderdash. His more honest attempt at biography came shortly after his conviction, when he called a press conference in his sell, and began confessing to a mind-boggling panorama of felonies and murders.

Meanwhile, Detective Geyer and his men had proceeded to the condemned remains of Holmes former "Castle", where, descending to the basement, they began to excavate in the reeking damp. Sure enough, in short order, they found what amounted to the fragmented, skeletal remains of nearly two hundred victims. The sheer, staggering magnitude of Holmes' crimes paled the hardened policemen.

Holmes confessed, at the end of his life to having become "a

moral idiot". Indeed, it was only after being confronted with the overwhelming evidence of his guilt that the futility of lying gave way to the utter joy he quite clearly exhibited in recounting his grave misdeeds for various reporters and alienists. They, in turn, were only too delighted to have the inside scoop of the foulest murderer any of them had ever encountered in their careers as journalists.

And, they were genuinely dismayed when Holmes' confessions were cut short by his appointment with the hangman.

He had only managed to confess as far as his twenty-seventh victim.

### The Demon of the Belfry

Theo Durrant was a nice, respectable church-going young man with a strange predilection for combining his religious duties and his erotic fixations.

This is not unknown in the world today, and certainly was not unknown then, but it has never, to the best of our knowledge, led to anything in the way of spiritual expiation. Quite the contrary.

Theo was a medical student in old San Francisco, who, likewise, was deeply involved in the activities of his family church--Emmanuel Baptist. He was even the leader of the youth group "Christian Endeavor" and was a well-known local Scoutmaster, as well. He was, in every sense of the word, an upright, outstanding young man.

But, as always, there was a fly in the spiritual ointment that comprised Theo Durrant; a wrinkle in the psychic fabric which comprised the totality of his being.

It began quite innocuously, with Theo (who, besides being an usher and Sunday-school teacher, was also Church Librarian and part-time sexton) was entrusted with a master key to the premises. Theo, whose mind must have ever been crawling with ideas and opportunities to enact some of his less-savory fantasies, had, up until that time, never had the opportunity to enjoy the uninterrupted privacy those acts he contemplated required. But their must have been something, something about the sterile sanctity of his church,

the well-scrubbed purity of the female parishioners, that sent his fertile, hot little mind into an erotic no-mans-land of sick imaginings.

The first hint that something was wrong about Theo, the first “warning sign” that, perhaps, the nice, decent, all-American churchgoing lad was quite possibly mad as a hatter, was also completely, perversely ignored. Theo, one fine Sunday after services, invited a young lady into the library to join him for a short discussion. When the compliant young lady found her way to the reading room, she was horrified, as Theo Durrant strode out of the shadows entirely naked from head to foot.

We can only imagine what he might have said, at this point, if he said anything at all. However, we do know that the young woman fled from the room in terror, screaming in either horror, outrage, embarrassment, or disgust. Possibly some combination of all of them.

At this point, any rational person would expect that the church pastor (whose name goes, strangely, unrecorded in every account) would have had the temerity to take the young man aside, and explain to him, as gingerly as possible, why it was inappropriate for a full-grown man to expose himself in such a lewd and shameless fashion to an embarrassed young lady, particularly within the confines of a church. In fact, as things stand today, Theo Durrant would have been immediately jailed for indecent exposure, and quite possible charged with attempted sexual assault. At the very least, he would have been confined to a psychiatric facility for an indeterminate duration of time.

But, alas, things were handled in a much more circumspect fashion in that delicate day and age.

His first murder victim, Blanche Lamont, was a distinctively attractive young out-of-towner, who came to San Francisco to make her way as an actress.

Quickly deciding to attend Emmanuel Baptist as her church of choice, she made an immediate impression on young Theo Durrant, who, may safely assume, was only able to be physically close to women when cutting open their cadavers at the medical college. The

two became fleeting, flirting acquaintances.

It was one bright, sunny, otherwise happy day when, having last been seen departing from a street car, Blanch Lamont was sighted making her way to Emmanuel Baptist Church. Although he later claimed he, coincidentally was on the same car, Theo Durrant claimed he never saw her, nor did anyone claim to have seen him ever riding that particular car at that exact time .

As to what the young lady was doing going to church at that particular hour, we can only surmise that Theo Durrant must have set up a pre-appointed tryst. At any rate, when she arrived, the baleful , hypnotic strains of church organ music resounded through the old building, as the organist was, currently, sitting alone practicing.

Luckily for Durrant, the volume of the music, as well as the intense concentration of the musician, drowned out the sounds created by what came next.

Durrant, stripped naked as the day he was born, stepped slowly from the closet, giving the young woman time to absorb what must have seemed to him like a brilliant, honest gesture. Some may take note of the personal symbolism that might be involved in Durrant's choice of locale. It should not be lost on anyone that he chose to murder his victims in a library (a church library, no less) , and that the significance of this might lie in the fact that, as a restrained, perfect, eager young scholar, Durrant spent his days in repressed solitude, pouring over books when he wasn't busy dissecting cadavers.

It may be that this ritualistic stripping of himself in a place of study, in a building devoted wholly to piety and abstinence, may have added an extra fillip of fetishistic pleasure to his madness. Or, it may have been purely symbolic.

Cynical people will say it meant nothing at all. However, we digress.

Blanche Lamont erupted into the expected fit, but, unlike his first attempt at exposing himself to an unwary woman, Theo Durrant sealed his fate, and the fate of the unfortunate young woman, by pouncing upon her in a frenzy of rage and sexual excitement, and

throttling her.

He quickly and easily snuffed out her life, letting her fall to the floor as he stood, gasping from excitement and exertion above her. He had, mysteriously, completed something in his psyche, feed some inner-demon that lashed in the miserable recesses of his unarticulated soul. He quickly donned his clothing, dragging the corpse behind him into the walk-in closet from which he always emerged naked, and then proceeded to rape the still-warm corpse. He then did something very strange, but which , in light of later events , was necessary in that it allowed him the time up until his discovery to commit his second murder.

He dragged the body behind him, clutching a fistful of her long hair, through a back hallway and up a flight of stairs to a ladder which led to the church belfry. He then climbed the rickety old ladder, trailing the corpse of his victim behind him. The work must have been grueling.

He then laid the young woman out in a gentle repose, using a stray block of wood as a pillow, and carefully folding the hands across the breasts. He must have considered, at that very moment, how peaceful she looked; as if she was only sleeping, he must have thought.

It was at this moment he began the process of expiating whatever psychic guilt would linger in his mind after committing such a grotesque deed. Or, perhaps, in the depths of his insane mind, there was no guilt; only satisfaction, and a knowledge that he had released a soul into the infinite.

After all, she was a good Christian girl.

Making his way downstairs, Durrant himself had the very bad fortune, as he was exiting the building, to encounter the organist, who was just closing up for the evening. The man, upon remarking how terrible Durrant looked, was reassured by the young man that he had simply been working at a gas jet, and accidentally had made himself sick.

Unsure whether or not he actually believed that, the organist simply shrugged and left the young man to his own devices, unawares

that the sound of his own musical talent being expressed had helped to cover the screams and stifle the evidence of the foul deed that had just been perpetrated.

It was only a scant time later that Blanche Lamont was missed, and a manhunt was called which, of course, was to no avail, as the corpse was still moldering, undetected, in the belfry of Emmanuel Baptist Church. Ironically, as a local Scoutmaster, it was the handsome, respectable young killer himself, Theo Durrant, who was entrusted to lead his troupe of young cadets through the surrounding hillsides in search of the missing girl.

Theo himself had a most interesting theory regarding the missing Miss Lamont: That she had been kidnapped, forcibly addicted to opium, and sold into the burgeoning “white slave” trade. Despite the sordid nature of his imaginings, this, actually, was not an uncommon occurrence in San Francisco in the late Nineteenth century, as young women were, at times, kidnapped and sold into prostitution, to be used by pimps and hustlers, to be kept as drug-addicted sexual slaves, and so forth.

However, the sheer excitement of the prospect seemed to rivet Durrant as he explained his theory to young friends. Indeed, they could see the macabre joy it afforded him, and some of them must have passed a fleeting thought as to how much Theo Durrant actually knew about kidnapping, sexual slavery, sadism, and Ms. Blanche Lamont.

Interestingly, it was some short time later that the grieving parents of Blanche Lamont received, quite by surprise, a package through the mail. In it, the girl's rings were found, along with the names of the church organist and a Sunday school teacher. Though this was a surprising turn of affairs, the police quickly deduced it was little more than a red herring.

In the hindsight of history, we can perhaps see that, in the depths of his distorted soul, Theo Durrant must have wanted to be caught. This self-destructive cat and mouse game with the police is a regular feature of serial murder cases, and one of the most perplexing and diabolical aspects of the personality of these perpetrators. Likewise,

one should note the complete, careless, sloppiness with which Durrant committed these crimes, almost as if he was ambivalent about whether or not he should ever be detected as the guilty party.

Is this, in effect, the way such individuals, who are incapable of feeling guilt in any conventional sense, attempt to expiate some deeper, internal feeling of remorse that, though they are not consciously repentant, they understand as a sort of subconscious drive to acquit themselves of the responsibility for their actions?

At any rate, it was from this idle, gross gossip, this compulsive need for Durrant to hint at a far-more horrifying fate for his victim than anyone else was, at the time, imagining, that gained him, for a short time, his only known sexual love affair.

Not much will ever be known of Minnie Williams, but one thing was for certain: She was a darn sight more liberated than most other women of her generation. What other folks perceived as a slightly sordid undercurrent in Durrant's personality, she perceived as the hint of an awesome sexual prowess and a deviant appetite. It was not long before they were engaging in sexual trysts in the church library.

Apparently, this transpired several times, but the final assignation proved deadly. It was, ironically, directly after most folks had filed out from Sunday services, when Minnie Williams and Theo Durrant slipped for the last time into the church library, and began to make love.

Whatever feral, barbaric thing had been crawling around the depths of the hideous mind of Theo Durrant suddenly reared upward from the black chasm of his being. In a fit of sexual frenzy, he thrust his hands around the neck of Minnie Williams, choking the life from her as she thrashed wildly, unexpectedly, around the room.

She was damn hard to kill. He managed to rip her dress off, thrusting the material of it down he throat. He then pulled a surgical knife from his trousers, and slashed her neck and wrists, finally rendering her desolation complete. However, the scene of the crime was a picture of total havoc.

He pulled the bloody body into the large closet, fell on top of it,



and ravished the corpse one final time. He then walked quietly out the front door of the church, into the bright daylight, as if the whole world was his oyster.

It was only the next day that several women discovered the scene of horror in the library, where splashes of dried blood and overturned furniture lent mute testimony to the scene of violence that had been perpetrated on the premises only the previous day. Moments later, they found the ravaged corpse of Minnie Williams, where Theo Durant had carelessly left after he was finished with it.

A general panic ensued among the women, who fearing the culprit might, perhaps, still be hiding on the premises, rushed out to alert the authorities. It was only a short time later that police, leading the way, returned to the church to confront a scene of appalling homicide.

One unnamed officer, upon a hunch, decided that he would ascend the rickety stairs to the belfry, and, upon doing so, discovered much what he had expected: a second body, "as white as marble", he later claimed, laid out as if in blissful repose with the head resting upon a block of wood.

It was immediately discernible, to all involved, that young Theo Durrant was the most likely culprit, as he was the only fellow with access to the building after-hours. Although first staunchly protesting his innocence. A quick trial followed, resulting in a sentence of death by hanging. Three years of appeals transpired before the sentence was finally carried-out.

Curiously, Theo Durrant walked to the gallows in an amazingly restrained manner, only imploring the executioner to, "Don't put that rope on me, my boy, until I've talked." The Hangman was having none of it, and William Henry Theodore Durrant fell through the trap door and into eternity, on January 7th, 1898.

One final grotesque anecdote revolves around the claiming of their son's body by Theo's rather distant, outwardly cold and obnoxious parents.

As the body was brought into the waiting room after the

execution, a warder at the prison asked them if they would like a cup of tea. Mrs. Durrant, indicating that that would be quite nice, was pleasantly surprised to note that the tray that was wheeled in not only contained a kettle and cups, but the remains of a sumptuous roast and some plates , as well.

Mrs. Durrant and her husband sat themselves down and began to feast, stopping only to pause as the body of Theo, his face swollen black and his tongue bit nearly in two, was brought in and transferred from a gurney to a pine box.

Mrs. Durrant looked at the corpse of her son, chewed reflectively, and her husband continued to finish their impromptu meal unabated.

After all, she would later claim, it never helps to grieve on an empty stomach.

Theo Durrant was cremated.

### Bela Kiss

The career of blood-drinking serial killer Bela Kiss was immortalized in a play called 23, by Antonin Artaud. Certainly his fiction could not be much stranger than Bela's own truth. You decide.

Bela Kiss, by all accounts was immensely popular in his little town of Czinkota, in Hungary, where he was something of a local bon-vivant, a party-going, garrulous, free spender whose good looks and sheer charm caught the eye of any number of eligible ladies who often wondered at the strangeness of such a kindly, generous, and, above all else, handsome man could remain, all to himself, in a roomy house with not but an elderly housekeeper to look after him. It must have seemed to them a regrettable waste of good husbandly material.

Indeed, it was not long before Bela, apparently, began to see the situation in quite the same light. Unbeknownst to his fellow townsfolk, he busily began placing ads in a number of prominent newspapers , seeking the companionship of young ladies as lonely,

and willing as himself to meet a prospective partner for courtship.

Locals were quick to notice the steady stream of attractive young ladies that seemed to flock around the Kiss home. It seemed that every time the villagers of Cinkota turned around, Bela would come to town sporting a lovely woman on his arm. Many were quick to point out that the women he was seen with, most often, were only with him for a very short time.

Sometimes merely a single occasion.

Rumors began to spread in the way that they will, but before anything could come of mounting suspicions, the life of Bela Kiss took an unexpected turn.

In June of 1914 a young, Slavic nationalist named Gavrilo Princip stepped into a side-street in Sarajevo , raised his pistol, and fired into a car, in which were riding the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie. The Archduke clutched his breast, fell over on his wife, and gasped out her name “Sophie” one last time, before plunging headfirst into the bitter maelstrom of death.

It was this single incident, performed by the unwitting hand of a fed-up Serbian nationalist , which erupted the smoldering “powder keg” of World War 1. It was only a scant time later that countries began to align themselves to commence what would become the “Great War”, the “War to End All Wars”, and the first real modern war fought in human history.

The grueling hell of trench combat--where soldiers spent interminable, maddening hours dug into the mud and filth, shooting at the enemy from behind protective barricades of sandbags--served only to add an increased fillip of personal misery to the duty of doughboys who may have been away from home for the very first times of their (often) short lives.

Trenches quickly filled with dead, wounded, and dying. Rodents became a common nuisance, but that was nothing compared to the onslaught of death that might accompany anyone going “over the top”.

Men returned--“Men With Broken Faces”--as little more than pathetic, wounded shadows of their former selves. Missing limbs,

legs, fingers, faces, they formed a repellent reminder of the devastation wrought by the work of man in the guise of industrialized killing, modernized medical treatment, and international conflict. At least, the living COULD be revived from the dead. Accidents and injuries, weapons that once would have killed rather than maimed, and explosions that , heretofore, had been unknown anywhere and everywhere on earth, had been unleashed--but could be survived. But at what cost to the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of the individual.

Some supposed the lucky ones had been those that were shot, blown to hell from artillery fire, or choked to death on "mustard gas".

One supposes this is why an entire new science of false limbs, false noses, and other false body accoutrements was soon developed.

Man always finds it psychologically convenient to hide whatever he may find unappealing beneath a layer of visual obfuscation, or psychological denial. But I digress.

It was to this great conflagration of slaughter that Bela Kiss found himself called, and being a dutiful son of Hungary, was soon departed from his home, leaving the custodial care of his property in the hands of an elderly female servant (whose later professed ignorance in the face of so much appalling evidence of her employer's misdeeds is still a subject of great conjecture).

Soon however, as the thick of fighting and the catastrophe of battle began to brew heavy in the Hungarian rank, it became apparent (at the very least, to the landlord that owned the property), that Kiss was going to be considerably in arrears as to the payment of his rent.

What said individual could possible do about this, under the circumstances, is anyone's guess, but it is highly unlikely that anyone under the circumstances would have the temerity to evict a man that was away busily fighting at the front lines. But, then, there is no reckoning with the strangeness one could witness in the various shadings of human character.

The landlord become distressed when, upon first entering the premises , he found what appeared to be a few drum-sized metal

containers, and not much else. Kiss was still off, presumably killing people on the battlefield (as opposed to his usual habit of snuffing them off of it), and assumed that the house had been vacated. He was wrong about this, but that didn't at all stop him from attempting to open the metal container,

He managed to poke a small hole in the top, from which exuded a noxious odor that, quite nearly, bowled him over. His suspicions grew, and upon fetching a local chemist, soon had his worst suspicions confirmed: the smell was, undeniably, that of rotten flesh.

Once the canisters were opened (and to the horror of both men, they found several more hidden in a storage shed) , it was discovered that that, within each, was crammed the nude body of a young woman, preserved in alcohol, The women had, apparently, each been strangled.

The authorities were alerted immediately, a police inspector, Dr. Nagy, departed immediately for the former Kiss residence. By this time, the housekeeper had finally made her terrified appearance, rushing out and commanding the assembled men to leave her master's property instantly.

Of course, bearing out their finding of the canned young corpses, the men assured her that, at this point, that that was quite beyond their ability to do.

At which point, she launched into frantic protestations of her innocence, as the assembled investigators began to scour the grounds. In short time, they found additional canisters, each offering up another grisly, nude young woman.

Later, some digging revealed bodies that had been buried in the earth behind the house.

Although accounts vary, the final grisly body count attributed to Bela Kiss has been recorded as anywhere between seventeen and twenty-four. Each had been strangled, and, perhaps most horribly, there was evidence of puncture marks on the side of the throat. The only conclusion that could be drawn from this was that Kiss, in his heated, fetishistic passion, had drawn out the blood from his victims, in order to bathe or drink it.

Most probably, he drank it.

The military was alerted quickly, and Kiss was eagerly sought-after in the field. Meanwhile, the frantic housemaid was fervently protesting her innocence concerning ANY knowledge of her employer's homicidal habits. Sensing that, perhaps, she could be primed for more information, Dr. Nagy pressed her emotionally on certain points, but she remained consistent enough in her protestation that he, essentially, began to believe in her utter ignorance.

One thing that her protestations did reveal however, was her knowledge of a key that led to a secret room, always locked, which she had been entrusted with, but instructed never to open under any circumstances. Shades of Bluebeard aside, Dr. Nagy must have thought it singularly odd that, given the long absence of her employer, Mrs. Jakubec had never once decided to simply peep inside, out of even curiosity.

Perhaps it just proved how wise she was.

Inside, Dr. Nagy found, to his surprise, a room covered completely in dusty old volumes, most of them relating, in some way, to murder, poisoning, criminal detection, or forensic pathology. Dr. Nagy was not surprised.

He further discovered a massive ledger, the chronicle of Kiss' correspondence with hundreds of different women across Hungary. Kiss had, apparently, been writing women for years, seeking them out by placing ads in newspapers and classified columns of Budapest papers. When he found, eventually, a prospect that seemed promising, he would romance, wine, dine, defraud, and destroy the young woman utterly. Then, he would drain her corpse, and drink her blood.

Lastly, of course, he canned his virginal victims like so much processed meat, capping them off with a lid, and leaving the corpses to ferment in wood alcohol. One supposes that, eventually, he may have hit upon the idea of cannibalism as a way of ridding himself of the growing cemetery he was tending.

One of the most amazing discoveries made by Dr. Nagy was that

Kiss had apparently been married. He had courted, and defrauded, a young woman fifteen years his junior, under an assumed name. Apparently, he had an actual fancy for this one, as he actually went to the considerable trouble and took the risk of meeting her parents. Or, perhaps it was only for the sake of securing the dowry, but, at any rate, the parents were supremely satisfied that their daughter had managed to secure such a prosperous, handsome husband.

After the young woman returned with him to Cinkota, for some reason, kiss decided that she no longer amused him. She was coldly dispatched in a short period of time, and joined the rest of his paramours, a human pickle in a giant metal drum.

Amazingly enough, the parents became concerned when, after a considerable amount of time had passed, they had still heard nothing from their newly-wedded daughter. In mounting anxiety they traveled to Cinkota to confront Kiss, who did his best job of appearing distraught, explaining that his new bride had run away to America, supposedly to pursue a career on the stage. He even produced a letter to this effect, penned in her unmistakable hand.

Dr. Nagy could only suppose under what pretence or threat he had forced her to compose it; possibly, he gave her no explanation at all, save that she was his wife, and then , afterwards, simply killed her, now content that he could use this letter as a convenient piece of evidence should he ever be questioned.

The military, which had, under the most precarious of circumstances, had put out a general call to the front to apprehend Infantryman Kiss at once, finally decided it had located him in a field hospital, where reposed, in critical condition, a soldier named “Bela Kiss” , who answered to the same, general description as Dr. Nagy’s man.

Rushing to the field hospital, Nagy and other detectives found themselves in an unenviable situation. To begin with, the man had expired just hours before they reached him, injuries received in combat. And, also, he wasn’t the right size.

The fact that “Bela Kiss” was a fairly common name in Hungary wasn’t lost on them, either.

Bela Kiss was never apprehended, or seen, conclusively, again, however, he became a kind of murderous “Flying Dutchman”, with Bela Kiss: sighting cropping up as frequently in the subsequent years and decades as sightings of Elvis or Bigfoot. He was rumored to be in Romania, France, Great Britain, rumored to have booked passage to the States; some said he was in Hong Kong.

It was surrealist Antonin Artaud who gave to Kiss a kind of lasting fame, with his short, experimental play 32, which replaced the character of Kiss with that of a brilliant, well-loved doctor. The play ends with the discovery of several large canisters. Upon one being opened, the body of a naked woman is found inside.

But Bela Kiss walked away into the twilight of infamy, another footnote in the long history of horrors. Like Jack the Ripper, he was never captured.

Unlike Jack the Ripper, few people still care.

### Albert Fish

In the long history of murder and mayhem, there are few characters more sickening and reprehensible than Albert Fish.

Born Albert Howard Fish in 1870, Fish was the scion of a respectable, upstate New York family with ties in the American Revolution, Fish nonetheless was abandoned from childhood and left in the care of a brutal orphanage, where he claimed that he first gained his predilection for masochism and sadism, which he practiced with fervor for the rest of his life.

After a short period of wanderings and doing odd jobs, Fish “settled down” for a short time, fathering children and trying to cultivate an aura of domestic respectability. It was to be short lived.

His wife, a no-less bizarre creature than her husband, soon attracted the affections of an extra-marital paramour, whom she initially insisted must be allowed to move into the house with the family. When Fish objected, she left with her lover for a short time, only to return later and demand that her lover and she be re-admitted into the household. Fish relented, and allowed her to move back in,



but insisted that her lover find himself another place to stay.

However, later Fish found that she had simply secreted him away in the attic. Fish finally booted them both out of his sordid life, but his character only continued to sicken into a nightmare of diabolical perversity.

He would frequently encourage neighbor children to paddle his buttocks; it was eventually discovered by one of the children that he had manufactured his own studded paddle for the purposes of self-flagellation.

Although Fish gave off the aura of being the long-suffering single father trying to do his best to keep his small family of children clothed and fed, he began to seek out children to molest privately. One of his most well-known instances of maniacal behavior involves him taking his children to the family cottage, stripping off his clothing, running outside under the full moon, and declaring to the night, "I am the Christ!"

Fish's tallies of child victims of molestation are sickening enough, but slowly, the thrill of simple sexual abuse began to wear thin. Darker ideas began to explode in the fragmented recesses of his insane mind: ideas involving murder, dismemberment, and cannibalism.

Fish was a devotee of cannibalistic stories, finding especial inspiration in the story of *Arthur Gordon Pym* by Edgar Allan Poe, and the newspaper accounts of infamous German "lustmord" killers such as Fritz Harrmann. Fish, as a fetish, carried clippings of sensational cases and anecdotes involving cannibalism in his pockets for years, and it was at this time, according to his children, he also gained his predilection for eating raw meat.

Fish's first run-in with the authorities occurred, oddly enough, due not to his sexual abuse of young children (he never, apparently, abused his own), but because of another of his morbid sexual activities: his habit of writing obscene letters to women seeking companionship through "Lonely Hearts" pen-pal clubs.

The letters frequently began with his describing himself as a friendless, older man who had had the great misfortune of losing his

family in an accident. He would usually continue, his letter becoming , gradually, more shocking and perverse with each sentence, by explaining that it was absolutely necessary that he be flogged by a handsome woman , so as to enable him to maintain his psychological equilibrium.

By the end of reading the letter, the luckless recipient would usually be too shocked to give any sort of reply. Soon, the obscene “mash notes” caught the attention of police authorities, and Fish found himself interred at Bellevue, where examining “alienists” pronounced him as “sane, but seriously perverse”. Make of that what you will.

Fish moved into murder, one supposes, in an effort to recapture the initial thrill he must have felt with his first crimes against children. There are no hard and fast estimates concerning the number of unfortunate children who fell prey to the demented Fish, but he confessed to a foggy six, and alluded, darkly, that it may have been dozens more.

Fish, a religious maniac as well as a sexual predator and pervert, scrupulously devoured the Bible, interpreting verses that seemed to suggest cannibalism and making them part of his own bizarre ritual of sin and repentance; sadistic mutilation, followed by self-flagellation.

It must have been during this period that Fish first concocted the idea of repenting for his sins by punishing himself with large needles, which he inserted methodically into the soft area between his anus and scrotum. Unbelievably, Fish lived with *twenty-nine* large needles inserted deep inside his body, all of which worked their way into the layers of his flesh, and even broke into pieces inside of him.

An x-ray later confirmed this.

Fish was, in the words of one examining authority at his later trial “a polymorphous pervert”. His activities list a bewildering array of fetishes and perversions, including coprophilia (ingesting of human feces, his own), the drinking of his own urine, and cannibalism. The last became the cornerstone of his infamy.

It was in 1928 that Fish first placed an add in a New York paper

seeking the services of a young man to do “farm work, upstate”. Unfortunately for the Budd family of Manhattan, young Edward Budd Jr. saw the add, and telegraphed Fish, telling him that he would be more than interested in helping out.

Fish made his appearance at the Budd home, using the assumed name “Mr. Howard”, and, sizing up Edward as being possibly too strong and healthy to kill (Fish was then a wheezy, weak fifty-eight year-old, who seemed to anyone that met him even older), became quickly entranced with twelve-year-old Grace Budd, who seemed a much more fitting prospect for what Fish really had in mind.

He quickly assured the family that young Edward Budd Jr. would work out just fine, but that “Mr. Howard” would have to go back to his farm to prepare a room for him, and then would come to get him in just a few hours. He also charmed the family into letting their daughter, little Grace accompany him to his “daughter’s birthday party”, assuring them that she would be fine with him until they returned, and that young Edward should hurry up and pack a few things. This proved to be a tragic, fatal mistake, and one Mr. and Mrs. Edward Budd regretted for the rest of their lives.

Fish took the unsuspecting Grace to the train station, carrying with him his familiar black briefcase in which he carried his “Implements of Hell”: a bizarre collection consisting of razors, needles, a saw, a butcher knife, a studded paddle, belt, etc. It was his own “torture and murder kit”, and he rarely left home without it.

The train took them to white plains, N.Y. , to Fish’s own Wisteria Cottage , where he left little Grace playing outside, somewhat confused, we must assume, at where the location of the birthday party was supposed to be.

He then went inside, stripped off his clothing, and called her from the window. Grace ran into the cottage, made her way up the dim, dust-choked stairs, and, according to his confession after he was arrested, screamed when she saw him, declaring pitifully, “I’ll tell mama!”

Fish decapitated the girl, drained her blood into a bucket, and then proceeded to dismember and cut sections of her flesh away.

These he cooked, and consumed in an orgy of deviancy that occupied him for several sickening days.

Meanwhile, the Budds had become frantic when “Mr. Howard” failed to return with their daughter in due time, and quickly alerted police. But it was to no avail: the trail of “Mr. Howard” was cold, and all traces of him disappeared into, seemingly, thin air.

Amazingly, Fish later recounted that he traveled back to New York City with the flesh remains of Grace Budd wrapped entirely in an old newspaper, sitting it on his lap on the train, feeling the special thrill of it against his pulsating, needle-stuffed groin.

Six long years passed with nary a hint of what had happened to poor, unfortunate Grace Budd. Despite the best efforts of detectives, the trail went completely cold. Finally, an enterprising detective by the name of King caught up with Fish, chiefly due to a letter that the demented Fish, in a stab at perverse repentance, scribbled anonymously to the Budd family.

The letter, which must now qualify as a classic in the annals of demented documents, follows:

*Dear Mrs. Budd. In 1894 a friend of mine shipped as a deck hand on the Steamer Tacoma, Capt. John Davis. They sailed from San Francisco for Hong Kong, China. On arriving there he and two others went ashore and got drunk. When they returned the boat was gone. At that time there was famine in China. Meat of any kind was from \$1-3 per pound. So great was the suffering among the very poor that all children under 12 were sold for food in order to keep others from starving. A boy or girl under 14 was not safe in the street. You could go in any shop and ask for steak—chops—or stew meat. Part of the naked body of a boy or girl would be brought out and just what you wanted cut from it. A boy or girl's behind which is the sweetest part of the body and sold as veal cutlet brought the highest price. John stayed there so long he acquired a taste for human flesh. On his return to N.Y. he stole two boys, one 7 and one 11. Took them to his home stripped them naked tied them in a closet. Then burned everything they had on. Several times every day and night he spanked them—tortured them—to make their meat good and tender. First he killed the 11 year old boy, because he had the fattest ass and of course the most meat on it. Every part of his body was cooked*

*and eaten except the head—bones and guts. He was roasted in the oven (all of his ass), boiled, broiled, fried and stewed. The little boy was next, went the same way. At that time, I was living at 409 E 100 St. near—right side. He told me so often how good human flesh was I made up my mind to taste it. On Sunday June the 3, 1928 I called on you at 406 W 15 St. Brought you pot cheese—strawberries. We had lunch. Grace sat in my lap and kissed me. I made up my mind to eat her. On the pretense of taking her to a party. You said yes she could go. I took her to an empty house in Westchester I had already picked out. When we got there, I told her to remain outside. She picked wildflowers. I went upstairs and stripped all my clothes off. I knew if I did not I would get her blood on them. When all was ready I went to the window and called her. Then I hid in a closet until she was in the room. When she saw me all naked she began to cry and tried to run down the stairs. I grabbed her and she said she would tell her mamma. First I stripped her naked. How she did kick—bite and scratch. I choked her to death, then cut her in small pieces so I could take my meat to my rooms. Cook and eat it. How sweet and tender her little ass was roasted in the oven. It took me 9 days to eat her entire body. I did not fuck her tho I could of had I wished. She died a virgin.*

Of course, it was not long after receiving this hideous missive that Detective King was on the trail. Upon examination, the letter proved to be written on a particular type of hotel stationary, and was quickly traced back to a bell hop, who admitted pilfering some of the stationary, which, he admitted, must have been left by accident in a room he had rented, and just recently vacated for different quarters.

The room turned out to be the current residence of Albert Howard Fish.

When King first stepped forward to arrest Fish, he described the strange behavior of the old man. Fish, his eyes steady and calm, reached into his pocket and took out a razor blade, and held it up as, one supposes, some sort of feeble gesture of defiance. It was the work of a minute for Detective King to twist it out of the old man's fist, and get the cuffs on him.

Fish was first imprisoned in the Tombs, the infamous New York City jails, and then later sent to Sing-Sing to await execution. His trial

revealed him to be a man whose appetite for perversion was never sated, and whose demonic deviance had descended to depths unparalleled in the annals of criminal history.

Fish readily admitted his infatuation with feces, his drinking of blood, urine, his molestation of possibly hundreds of innocent children, his predilection for inflicting and experiencing pain and torture, his obsession and practice of cannibalism, and his murder of six children.

Fish blamed his mad obsession with sadomasochism as stemming from his abusive childhood in a Catholic orphanage, where he repeatedly saw young boys whipped, and was whipped himself. It was here he began to enjoy “everything which caused pain”. Or, so he claimed.

The jury were treated to a mind-boggling litany of lurid details, but it was not only those who found themselves in the courtroom during the sensational trial of the man the press dubbed the “Moon Maniac”, that were privy to Fish’s abnormalities.

The prison staff themselves were ever vigilant with Fish’s food, lest any bones or sharp objects be let into him to eat with. We must assume he was forced, quite abit, to use his fingers.

On one occasion, when Fish was accidentally left with a portion of meat still attached to bone, he carefully removed the bone, and was caught using it to carve slashes into his withered chest. The cadaverous old fiend was quickly relieved of his prize, and the authorities promised themselves a greater degree of circumspection henceforth, in regards to inmate Fish’s meals.

One further incident serves to illustrate the depth of the man’s surrealistic obsession with self-abuse. Fish managed by some means to obtain cotton balls and medicinal alcohol (perhaps from the prison infirmary), as well as wooden matches. When found with these contraband items, he confessed freely that he received great pleasure from soaking the cotton balls in alcohol, inserting them in his rectum, and lighting them.

The jury took almost no time in finding Albert Fish sane, and therefore culpable and a candidate for a ride on “Old Sparky”. Fish

was sentenced to die by electrocution, a notion that he claimed satisfied him. He remarked that electrocution would be "...the supreme thrill of my life. The only one I haven't tried."

Fish spent the short days leading up to his death studiously seeking salvation in the pages of his Bible, and promising to intervene with God on behalf of the living whom he was leaving behind. His final words, while being led to the chair were, reportedly, "I don't know why I'm here".

An apocryphal story has long circulated, concerning the needles that Fish lived with in his groin, and the flow of the electricity from the chair. Supposedly, when the switch was thrown, the needles caused the electric current to spark, short-circuiting the chair and requiring that Fish be given a second jolt of current before he died.

But it was all a myth. Fish died, in sharp contrast to how he had lived, completely normally. He was the oldest prisoner ever executed at Sing-Sing, up to that time: January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

## COMING SOON: Part 2: An Epoch of Homicide!

Bluebeard: Henri Landru

The Demon Axeman of New Orleans

Gunfight at the Outlaw Corral: Jesse James and Other Gunslingers

Lustmord

Barrow, Barker , Dillinger and Death: An Era of Outlaws

Dr. Thomas Neil Cream

Ed Gein

The Gorilla Murderer

Carl Panzram

George Reginald Halliday Christie

John George Haigh

Alligator Man...

The Honeymoon Killers...

Private Holocaust: Marcel Petiot...

William Heirins...

Strange and Terrible: Serial Killers

Charlie Starkweather...

Harvey Murray Glatman ...

The Moors Murderers...

The Boston Strangler...

Richard Speck...

Manson...

This Is The Zodiac Speaking...

Son of Sam...

The Killer Cults...

Hillside Stranglers

Ted Bundy

Yorkshire Ripper...

Ed Kemper...

Leonard Lake and Charles Ng...

The Rostov Ripper...

Fred and Rose West...

Killer Clown...

Some Angels of Death...

Pee Wee Gaskins ...

Henry Lee Lucas and Otis Toole...

Arthur Shawcross...

Richard Trenton Chase...

The Night Stalker...

Dennis Nilsin...

Female Serial Killer: Aileen Wuornos ...

Milwaukee Maniac...

Green River Killer...

B.T.K ...

Conclusion: The Wages of Sin...





Special Photo Section



Cannibal killer Albert Fish



Another Ripper victim: the post-mortem photographs of Catherine Eddowes.



Pelvic X-ray of Fish revealing needles shoved inside his groin.



Vlad Tepes "Dracula" enjoying a feast at a mass impalement.



Mutilated body of prostitute Mary Jane Kelly, victim of the notorious Jack the Ripper.

Special Photo Section



Bloody baron: Gilles De Rais



Serial killer Edward Gein.



Serial killer H.H. Holmes



Wisteria cottage , where Albert Fish murdered Grace Budd.

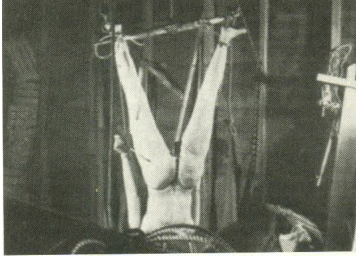


Mutilated body of Bernice Worden, victim of necrophiliac Ed Gein. Note: Ed Gein is not featured in this volume.



The tiny skull of Grace Budd (center right).

## Special Photo Section



Another graphic view of Bernice Worden.



The wages of sin are death: Executed serial killer Ted Bundy. Note: Ted Bundy is not featured in this volume.

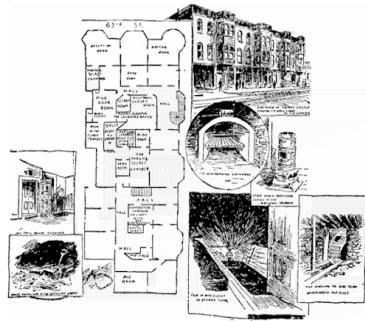


The "Murder Castle" from the street. H.H. Holmes could asphyxiate the guests in their rooms at his whim.



Serial killers are often known for their charming, ingratiating manner. Here, Ted Bundy charms a

female companion.



Layout of the Holmes "Murder Castle". This appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* during the trial.